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## *Joshua Bell & Steven Isserlis*

THE STAR SOLOISTS UNITE IN BRAHMS

Violinist Kyung Wha Chung  
explores Bach's Chaconne

Conductor John Wilson  
on recording Copland

Seattle Symphony celebrates  
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## SOUNDS OF AMERICA

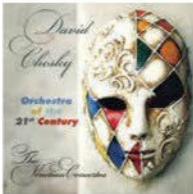
*A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada*

### Chesky

Venetian Concertos - No 1; No 2; No 3; No 4

Orchestra of the 21st Century

Chesky (F) JD379 (73' • DDD)



David Chesky's four Venetian Concertos for strings and ripieno flute, although they might suggest Vivaldi, are in practice like four versions of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* No 3 in which a struggle is going on for the music's soul. The performances even have their own original-instrument feel, rough, passionate and occasionally a little overwhelmed. And as sequenced by the composer – Nos 3, 1, 2 and 4 – the concertos begin to show an increasingly dark and emotional side.

Written and recorded in 2015, each concerto is in three movements of between four and six minutes, fast-slow-fast, driven by a high-energy, mostly minor-key metric insistence that, in the guise of formal Baroque style, seems intended to sweep listeners along in a flow fuelled by the explosive opening fireworks of No 3. Thereafter, Chesky takes off in virtuosic runs executed usually as one by his pick-up Orchestra of the 21st Century, which leads to unexpectedly sad and beautiful private places. There are no conventional booklet-notes so I contacted the composer, who explained: 'It was a game I made, a crossword puzzle, a complicated jigsaw puzzle to entertain myself. I was listening to the *Brandenburgs* one day and said to myself, to write music in this Baroque fugal style is really hard. Could I do it?'

To answer the question, Chesky worked according to his own set of 'modern concerto grosso' rules: 'If the Baroque style of composition continued, what would it sound like today?' The results could be worse. It could be Hindemith. **Laurence Vittes**

### Kotche

Drum-kit Quartets - No 1; No 3; No 6; No 50; No 51; No 51 (Chicago Realisation); No 54

Sō Percussion

Cantaloupe (F) CA21116 (53' • DDD)

### GRAMOPHONE talks to...

#### *Bob Lord*

The man behind the Ansonica label and its new release of music celebrating Cuba, 'Abrazo'

##### **Tell us about your work.**

As a CEO, producer, bassist and composer, I'm always seeking new combinations of music – fresh ways of approaching different modes of expression which will appeal to the various aspects of my responsibilities and passions as well as to the public.

##### **And where did the idea for 'Abrazo' come from?**

An initial exploratory trip to Cuba in May 2015 made clear that great music could be created in Havana, effectively span all manner of genres and styles, and contribute to fostering cultural exchange and understanding.

##### **How did you choose the composers?**

We held a call for scores to find new, unrecorded works which represented an attractive, engaging cross-section of modern music and could be well matched with the musicians and venues I visited. Virtually all of the composers we selected had been previously produced by Parma in other projects, so there was a high level of familiarity which contributed to the results.



##### **How was the atmosphere at the sessions?**

It was electric. I've spent years exploring how to blend the aesthetics and strategies of classical, jazz, and even rock/pop recording and production, methods where preparation and spontaneity meld with refinement and rawness to create something fresh and original. I think we achieved that here: it's not often you see a 20+ person big band crowded into a control room listening to a playback, talking about what can be improved and asking questions of the composer and producer.

##### **Are you planning a follow-up?**

'Abrazo' was recorded in November 2015, and in April of this year we returned to record again. That album, 'Intersections', comes out in October 2016, and we're heading back to Havana just after the New Year to keep on working.



If drum-kits are the centre of your existence, then Glenn Kotche's new CD will thrill you beyond your wildest imagination. If not, get ready for nine tracks of excitement that whether Sō Percussion whisper, bang or shout, Kotche's music will always be more subtle and varied than you might

expect drum-kits to be, always emotionally and viscerally aligned with the smooth flow of some highly entertaining music and time.

And while the composer's descriptions of his creative processes sound nerdy – each movement of Drum-kit Quartet No 3, for example, 'features a collapsing formal structure as it progresses' – the four members of Sō Percussion play with spontaneous energy as if their own creative juices had been unleashed by Kotche's detailed scores.

# COPLAND

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Leonard Slatkin

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*...Leonard Slatkin is a master when it comes to [creating], a real musical atmosphere...*

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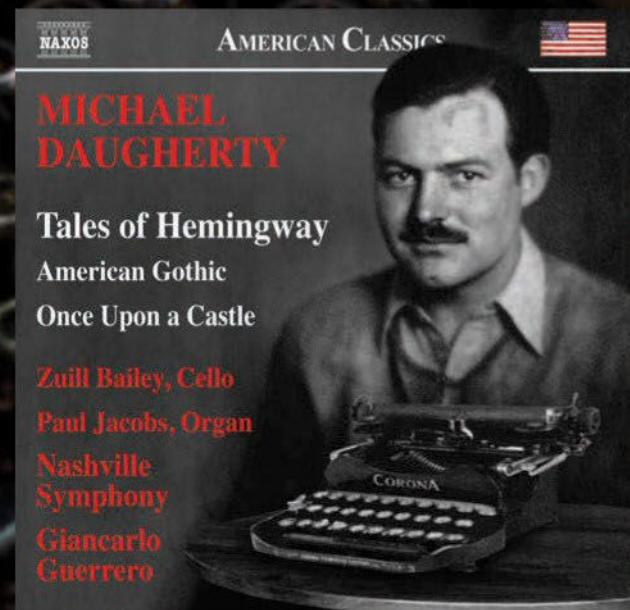
# DAUGHERTY

## TALES OF HEMINGWAY, AMERICAN GOTHIC & ONCE UPON A CASTLE

Zuill Bailey, *Cello*  
Paul Jacobs, *Organ*  
Nashville Symphony Orchestra  
Giancarlo Guerrero

“  
Among contemporary classical composers whose language is informed by popular music idioms, Michael Daugherty fuses the styles with a naturalness and authenticity...”

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Ivan Ženatý and Sandra Shapiro: breathing as one in violin sonatas by Martinů and Strauss

The opening 20 minutes, including Drum-kit Quartet No 51 arranged for marimbas and a piece for hi-hats, with extramusical noise occasionally intruding, serve as a warm-up. Then, hand-cranked sirens start up in Drum-kit Quartet No 50 and the fun is on as Sō Percussion drive the momentum at the end by playing back Kotche's earlier collage of Sō's recordings, 'in order to explore the performance space and the musicians' relationship with the audience'.

The following track, Drum-kit Quartet No 54, 're-examines' the basic rock beat by moving the traditional bed to the bass drum, which enables and encourages the drums to simply go wild. The last track is a gorgeous, lush 'reimagining' of Drum-kit Quartet No 51. Recorded by Pat Burns at The Loft in Chicago, the sound is hair-raising if your system can tame it, and especially if it can't. **Laurence Vittes**

## Martinů · R Strauss

**Martinů Violin Sonata No 3**

**R Strauss Violin Sonata, Op 18**

**Ivan Ženatý vn Sandra Shapiro pf**

**Azica** Ⓛ ACD71307 (54' • DDD)



The Ženatý-Shapiro Duo was born at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where

Czech violinist Ivan Ženatý and pianist Sandra Shapiro are faculty members. It's clear from their debut recording that they are on the same artistic wavelength. In sonatas by Richard Strauss and Bohuslav Martinů, they breathe as one, shaping phrases with utmost unanimity of purpose and flexibility.

Ženatý's timbre has just the right silvery tinge needed for Strauss's youthful sonata, a sweeping and poetic work that foreshadows the composer's works in the orchestral and operatic spheres. The violinist uses vibrato sparingly but also to magical effect, especially when Strauss is in his warmest frame of mind. Shapiro applies elegant shadings to the impassioned and expansive lines, interacting with Ženatý as the most sympathetic collaborator.

The musicians don't hold back in Martinů's Sonata No 3, a score from 1944, when the composer was living in exile in the United States. Ženatý and Shapiro imbue every moment of this vibrantly dramatic work with fierce urgency, from the tender moments of hope to the coruscating passages suggesting frustration and despair. The temptation to overstress the music's angry corners through aggressive attack never intrudes on this performance. As they wend their probing way through the four movements, Ženatý and Shapiro engage in a series of eloquent conversations, evoking Martinů's

distinctive sound world with a blend of sophistication, ardour and regret.

Although the musicians' full names can only be found deep within the booklet-notes, this recording whets the appetite for more distinguished artistry.

**Donald Rosenberg**

## 'Abrazo'

'The Havana Sessions'

**B Beck** Jazz Instrumental Suite. Jazz Vocal Suite

**Bourland** Alarcón Madrigals, Book 3 **D Bowyer**

**Bugs & Gas** **Brandman** Warm Winds in Havana

**Carollo** Burlesque **TL Miller** Hot Miami Nights.

On an Autumn Day **Mobley** Coloring with Water

**M Murray** After the Fall

**Various artists**

Ansonica Ⓛ ② ARO001 (85' • DDD)



Parma Recordings' daring foray into the Cuban music scene, inspired by Barack Obama's moves in December 2014 towards normalising relations with the US's long-estranged island neighbour, unleashes 85 minutes of the kind of cross-cultural, jazz-orientated energies, styles and attitudes that are becoming increasingly intoxicating to North American classical music aficionados seeking music they can get up, move around and even dance to.

# 2016–17 SEASON



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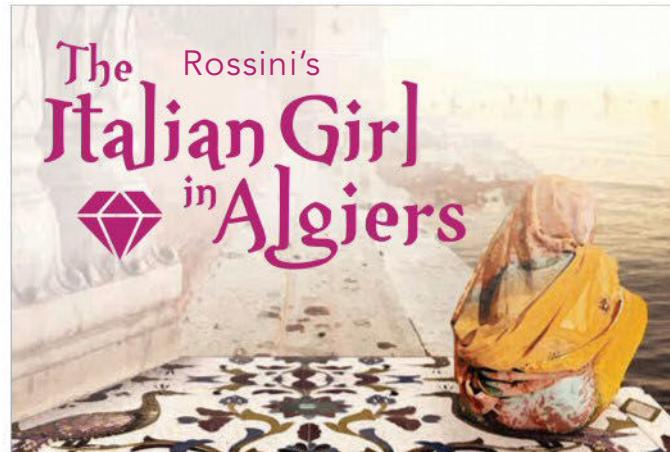
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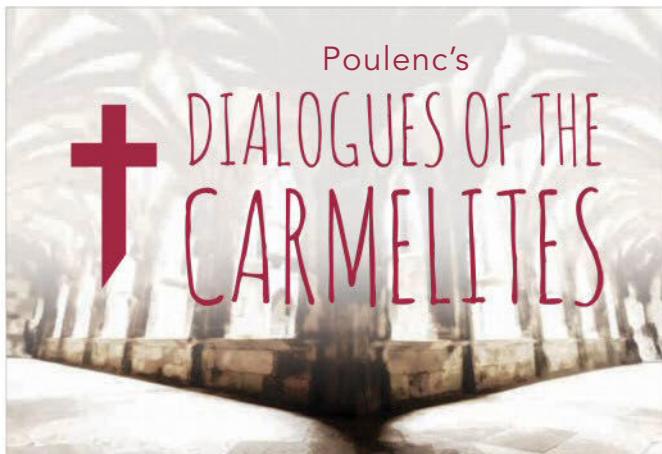
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Bob Lord's Cuban musicians gather for a series of jazz fusion recordings to launch Ansonica Records

In launching Ansonica Records, executive producer Bob Lord's embrace of music by mostly American composers and a dazzling roster of Cuban musicians, including members of the Buena Vista Social Club, Irakere and the National Symphony Orchestra, continues Parma's forking away from conventional classical music notions into territories that address the repertoire needs of emerging ensembles and the kinetic energy of their audiences, in music ranging from 'small-ensemble classical and modern classical to retro big-band jazz'.

Pride of place goes to Roger Bourland's ecstatic *Alarcón Madrigals*, Book 3, setting poetry of Francisco X Alarcón, its 'erotic flames' fanned by Vox Luna's exquisite tonal purity; and John Carollo's playful *Burlesque* about a woman who learns about music and life from a guitarist and a trumpeter, Fadév Sanjudo Rodríguez, who is crazy throughout and goes wild in a movement appropriately called 'Luca has a cadenza'.

And while the Cubans' fabulous chops make the jazz set-ups by Timothy Lee Miller, Bunny Beck, Mel Mobley and Michael Murray into delicious, occasionally exhilarating treats, Don Bowyer's itchy *Bugs & Gas* (eg biological and chemical weapons) and Margaret Brandman's evocative *Warm Winds in Havana* for four saxophones and percussion, stand out. **Laurence Vittes**

## 'First Day'

**Bragato Graciela y Buenos Aires** **Burhans**  
**Phantasie** **Enescu** Cello Sonata, Op 26 No 1  
**Ginastera** Pampeana No 2, Op 21 **Marais**  
**Improvisations sur les Folies d'Espagne**  
**Martinú** Variations on a Slovak Folksong, H378  
**Poulenc** Les chemins d'amour **D Visconti**  
**Hard-Knock Stomp**  
**Laura Metcalf** vc **Matei Varga** pf  
Sono Luminus **DSL92201** (59' • DDD)



Many young musicians today put out mixed compilation recitals that feature a wide range of composers and genres. It's a healthy trend, especially when the programme makes intrinsic musical sense from start to finish, as does this release with cellist Laura Metcalf and pianist Matei Varga.

For example, the smoky syntax of cellist/composer José Bragato's tango-based opening selection is not far akin to the folk-based idiom of Martinú's Variations that follow. In this context, the next selection, Caleb Burhans's post-minimal-bordering-on-new-age *Phantasie* serves as a palate-cleanser before the main course, Ginastera's large-scale *Pampeana* No 2. Here the cellist and pianist brilliantly address the music's intense rhythmic interplay and extended lyrical

passages. If anything, the pair reach higher expressive heights in Enescu's one-movement Sonata in F minor, a tempestuous piece by a precocious 17-year-old composer that gushes forth with brilliant ideas in all directions.

Contrary to Metcalf's annotations, I don't hear anything remotely 'dirty' about Dan Visconti's bluesy *Hard-Knock Stomp*, adapted for solo cello from the viola original. Indeed, Metcalf 'swings' much harder throughout Marais's Variations on *La folia*. She and Varga project the theme on a grand scale, from which the variations unfold in carefully gauged tempo relationships. Her seamless, singing legato lines above the staff amount to a masterclass in control and deep listening; also note the lute-like sonority Varga divines from the accompaniment's soft, sparse chords.

As an encore, Metcalf offers Poulenc's chanson 'Les chemins de l'amour', where she actually sings the second verse. Her soft, slightly tentative vocalising provides a sweet foil to her suave, experienced bow arm. As always, the Sono Luminus production team of Dan Merceruio and Daniel Shores provide gorgeously lifelike engineering. **Jed Distler**

## 'Some Measures for Living'

**Charnofsky** Four Characters **Daley** In **Cynthia's Garden** **Makholm** Flute Sonata **R Newman**  
Improvisation, Somewhat Reasonable

PULITZER PRIZE WINNING COMPOSER

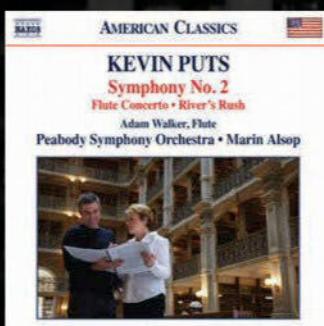
# KEVIN PUTS

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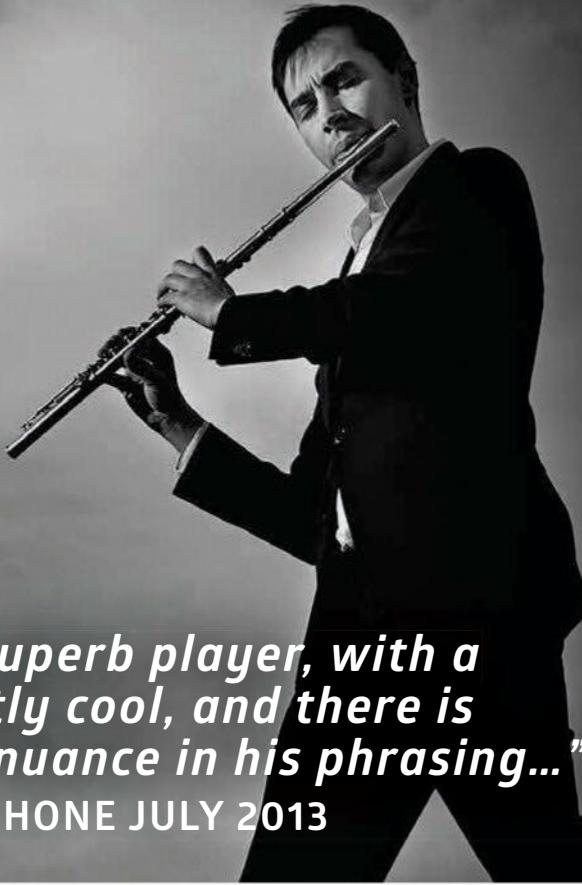
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Adam Walker, FLUTE



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# PROKOFIEV

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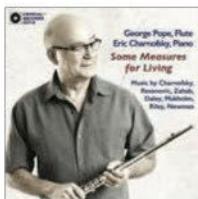
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Frank Almond: tracing the adventures and misadventures of the 'Lipiński' Strad

**Resanovic Flute Sonata C Riley Moerae, the****Fates Zahab ...some measures for living****George Pope // Eric Charnofsky pf**

Crystal Records (CD718 (73' • DDD)



George Pope's recital of deeply tonal music only flautists and academics usually hear

presents Nikola Resanovic, Carl Riley, Ron Newman, Nancy Daley, Eric Charnofsky, Roger Zahab and Joseph Makholm in music that was written for musical communities of audience, flute-playing colleagues, composers and students. In this case, the communities are at Ohio places like the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. The flautist the composers have written for is the emeritus, still active George Pope, reflecting his mellifluous aesthetics and wide-ranging stylistic tastes, with an emphasis on 'beautiful melodies and colours'.

While the relentless swirling down into the boundaries between the instrument's soprano and alto registers in Resanovic's Flute Sonata is only for grown-ups, Daley's innocent dalliances *In Cynthia's Garden* are directed at children. And the opening solo cadenza in Newman's *Improvisation, Somewhat Reasonable*, is a *tour de force* for only the coolest. The most

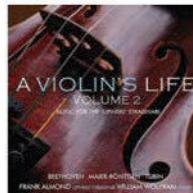
remarkable is longtime collaborator Charnofsky's *Four Characters*, which begin with an intrusive invasion by a sexy inner rhythm and uncontrolled swellings, end with an octatonic orgy and include a vertiginous 'Popcorn Music' that could become a required audition piece – or a video game classic.

The wonder of Pope's playing is how engagingly, articulately, flowingly and objectively he pours himself into music that is the same but also very different. The roughly presented booklet-notes, written by the composers themselves, are immediately authoritative and provide a curious range of writing styles. The sound, recorded at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC, has lots of energy.

Laurence Vittes

**A Violin's Life, Vol 2****Beethoven Violin Sonata No 9, 'Kreutzer', Op 47<sup>a</sup>****Maier-Röntgen Violin Sonata<sup>a</sup>****Tubin Solo Violin Sonata****Frank Almond vn // William Wolfram pf**

Avie (AV2363 (67' • DDD)



Even if you didn't know that violinist Frank Almond had been viciously attacked and his 'Lipiński' Stradivarius lost for nine days, this recording would

be a magnificent testament to his artistry. With the 'Lipiński' tucked safely under his chin, Almond is a commanding and refined interpreter of works by Amanda Maier-Röntgen, Eduard Tubin and Beethoven. In two of the pieces, he teams with an equally authoritative artist, pianist William Wolfram.

The instrument provides Almond with the opportunity to revel in a tone at turns lustrous and sleek, and also adaptable to the varied music he plays. The Violin Sonata in B minor by Maier-Röntgen, a Swedish composer and violinist from the late 19th century, is indebted to Schumann and Brahms in its heartfelt and brooding Romanticism. The three movements are beautifully crafted and give both violinist and pianist a forum to communicate with touching and dramatic intensity.

The Estonian composer Tubin fled to Sweden in 1944, a jarring move that can be heard in more than a few of his pieces, including the Solo Violin Sonata from 1962. It's a mercurial work, full of slashing and nostalgic ideas that make its nearly 10-minute length a gripping experience. Almond gives a fiercely committed account.

Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata brings the musicians back together for a performance vivid in interplay and keenly attentive to the score's wonders and mysteries. With Almond and Wolfram at the controls, the 'Lipiński' teams with a Steinway model D to illuminating effect. Donald Rosenberg

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## Music can help to heal the divisions in society

We live in a world of division – though of course, sadly, we always have. Sometimes we ignore it, muddling on or turning away. But sometimes events force those divisions unavoidably into the public eye. The horrific massacre in Nice; the following day the attempted coup in Turkey. And, in the UK, a referendum which threw stark and overdue light on divisions within British society. Light illuminates the divisions, but also enables us to see more clearly the cracks, the better to address them.

Music has a proud history of uniting, sometimes intentionally, sometimes simply as a reflection of what it is and does. At a high-profile level, projects such as Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra bring players from different backgrounds together and inspire their audiences. Concerts such as the Beethoven Ninth that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall can be as eloquent as any speech. Or the playing (and tears) from Rostropovich in Dvořák's Cello Concerto, a Czech masterpiece, at the 1968 Proms on the day the Soviet tanks rolled forward to crush the Prague Spring (released by BBC Legends). Or the powerful simplicity of opening this year's BBC Proms with the Marseillaise as a tribute to the victims of Nice and to the ideals of a free society.

But step away from the global stage, and perhaps music's even greater unifying role is less celebrated and more subtle. I think of the extraordinary work done by teaching organisations or the education departments of orchestras, or groups like Streetwise Opera whose belief in the power of music to change



the lives of homeless people found such moving testimony in a Bach *St Matthew Passion* earlier this year (available on YouTube). Such outreach projects are of course conceived to help the disadvantaged, but at their best it's not always clear-cut who is the giver, and who is the recipient – such interaction channels understanding in both directions, to participants and audiences alike. A hand is extended to people to help them up, but one hopes that, through shared experiences, seeds are sown on both sides of a divide, until such a boundary becomes blurred and ultimately irrelevant. The role such community and grassroots initiatives can play in healing society cannot be overestimated, and it is where new support now needs to go if we really believe art is for everyone and can change lives – which I believe it is and can.

Finally there's the simple fact of the international nature of music-making. Just take a single disc from this year's *Gramophone* Awards shortlist: a Norwegian violinist joins a German orchestra and an American conductor in concertos by an Englishman and an American forced to flee his native Austria – and recorded by a label based in France.

Difference and division are not the same: the former can be a creative catalyst and source of learning. Division not so. The more thoughtful people today are looking at the fractures around us, reading through the rhetoric and seeking solutions. Music has a part to play in that, and where it can, we all have a responsibility to be its greatest cheerleaders: let us not waste the opportunity.

[martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com](mailto:martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com)

### THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony is a boon companion for difficult times,' says **DAVID GUTMAN**,

author of this month's Collection. 'Neither optimistic nor pessimistic, this is music that offers a realistic, Beckettian kind of hope: "You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." The best recordings, not all of them old, make us think we can.'



'The Seattle Symphony's transformation over the past half decade under its Music Director Ludovic Morlot

has been interesting to observe,' says **THOMAS MAY**, author of this month's feature on the orchestra and its burgeoning relationship with the music of Dutilleux. 'It really is a case study in how orchestras are adapting to new challenges.'



'It was fascinating to attend John Wilson's recording session for his second Aaron Copland instalment on Chandos,' says **KATE MOLLESON**, who met the down-to-earth conductor for this issue's feature.

'He somehow managed to draw valid parallels between the MGM musical tradition and this thorny mid-century symphonic repertoire.'

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# NEW FROM PROPER MUSIC

ABC 4811929

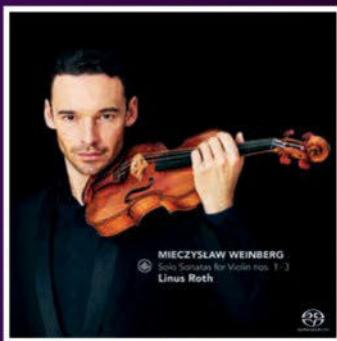


## AUSTRALIAN BRANDENBURG ORCHESTRA BRANDENBURG CELEBRATES

ABC CLASSICS

Recently heard accompanying Andreas Scholl in the soundtrack to the James Bond film Spectre, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra celebrates their 25th anniversary with a baroque flourish – from Handel and Vivaldi to little known gems by Brescianello, and the world-premiere of Elena Kats-Chernin's Bach-inspired Prelude and Cube.

CC 72688



## LINUS ROTH MIECZYSŁAW WEINBERG: SOLO SONATAS FOR VIOLIN NOS. 1-3

CHALLENGE CLASSICS

*"This is music in which [...] one man sought answers to questions that ravage all of mankind. [...] few men can contend with Weinberg's music as authoritatively as Linus Roth does in his performances of the three Sonatas for solo violin. [...] what Roth achieves on this disc is the recreation of a solitary voice, now made intelligible to every pair of ears willing to listen."* – [www.voix-des-arts.com](http://www.voix-des-arts.com)

CC 72710



## CAPPELLA PRATENSIS PIERRE DE LA RUE: MISSA CUM JOCONDITATE VISIONS OF JOY | THE CHAPEL OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH

CHALLENGE CLASSICS

This recording aims to capture a sense of the devotional soundscape that Hieronymus Bosch experienced throughout his life as a member of the music-loving Marian brotherhood. Pierre de la Rue was not only the most renowned composer of the Habsburg-Burgundian court but also an external member of the brotherhood from the early 1490s until his death in 1518. Indeed, La Rue may well have met Bosch during these years.

COBRA 0054



## LISA JACOBS & THE STRING SOLOISTS PIETRO ANTONIO LOCATELLI: L'ARTE DEL VIOLINO (CONCERTOS NOS. 1,2,4)

COBRA

In his music, Locatelli pushes the boundaries of the violin technique with an unprecedented virtuoso and at times romantic vision. Despite his obvious fascination for virtuosity, Locatelli ensures that one is captivated first and foremost by charming original melodies and bold characterization. With his L'Arte del Violino, Locatelli simply stunned the musical world. These works were innovative in almost every conceivable way.

AVI 8553310

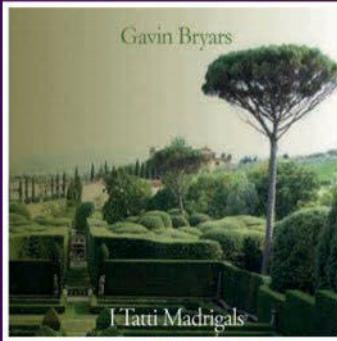


## LARS VOGT ROBERT SCHUMANN, BÉLA BARTÓK, THOMAS LARCHER: ...FOR CHILDREN

AVI

Lars Vogt: I always had great fun with pieces that manage to say a lot with few notes, as opposed to those that use many notes to say very little. [...] I prefer a profound message, and music that moves the soul. These are pieces for children that adults also love to play and listen to. Each of these gems contains such a rich variety of poetry, exuberance and expression! This CD is intended for all types of listeners.

BCGBCD26

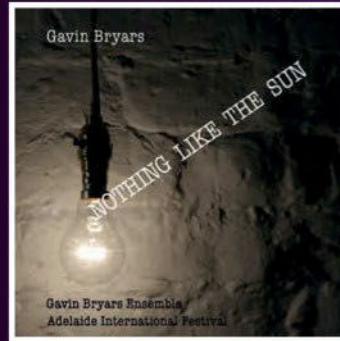


## SINGER PUR GAVIN BRYARS: I TATTI MADRIGALS

GB RECORDS

At the heart of the huge amount of music that Gavin Bryars has written for voices are his works for early music ensembles. The I Tatti Madrigals, all commissioned by Villa I Tatti (the Harvard Centre for Italian Renaissance Studies), comprise 11 six-part madrigals, his Fifth Book of Madrigals written for the German vocal ensemble Singer Pur, as well as an exquisite eight-part madrigal from Book Four.

BCGBCD24

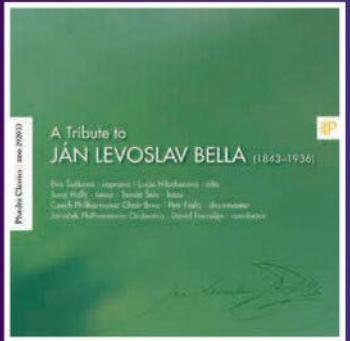


## GAVIN BRYARS ENSEMBLE GAVIN BRYARS: NOTHING LIKE THE SUN

GB RECORDS

The Gavin Bryars Ensemble, with soprano Peeyee Chen and tenor John Potter, recorded these settings of eight Shakespeare sonnets, commissioned by Opera North and the Royal Shakespeare Company, in a live performance from the Adelaide Festival. Each sonnet is first spoken, but within the music, by the Irish singer/actor Gavin Friday followed by the sung versions.

PHAE德拉 CLASSICS 292033



## JANÁČEK PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA A TRIBUTE TO JÁN LEVOSLAV BELLA (1843-1936)

PHAE德拉 CLASSICS

Ján Bella is the most important 19th-century Slovak composer. This CD includes world premieres of his Festive Mass and his cantata Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, performed by various soloists, the Czech Philharmonic Choir and the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by David Porcelijn. A revelation.



in memoriam  
**Einojuhani Rautavaara**

9.10.1928 | 27.7.2016

# GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice

**Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews**



## RECORDING OF THE MONTH



### BRAHMS

Violin Sonatas  
**Christian Tetzlaff vn  
 Lars Vogt pf**  
 Ondine  
 ▶ **ANDREW FARACH-COLTON'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 42**

Two acclaimed soloists unite, with a wonderful rapport, for a brilliant disc of Brahms – no, not just this month's cover story but the equally compelling Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt



**SIBELIUS** Symphonies Nos 3, 6 & 7  
**Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä**  
 BIS

Few conductors have such an distinguished history of bringing such consistent insight and instinctiveness to Sibelius as Vänskä – a fine addition to his, and Sibelius's, discography.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 53**



**LISZT**  
 Transcendental Etudes  
**Kirill Gerstein pf**  
 Myrios

Stamina, virtuosity and musicality are really to the fore in this extraordinary journey through Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* from former Gilmore Artist Award recipient Kirill Gerstein.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



**TELEMANN** Concertos  
**Florilegium**

Channel Classics  
 A delightful and spirited celebration, both of Telemann's music for flute and recorder, and of period ensemble Florilegium's 25th anniversary: many well-deserved congratulations on both counts!

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



**REGER** Four Solo  
 Violin Sonatas, Op 42  
**Ulf Wallin vn**  
 CPO

Swedish violinist Ulf Wallin oozes a total sense of command throughout this set of wonderful solo music, in both the forceful and fragile moments of pieces that pose considerable technical demands.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



**SCHOENBERG**  
 String Quartets

**Asasello Quartet**

Genuin  
 Following on from the Diotima Quartet's set of two months ago, the Asasello Quartet's Schoenberg survey is equally penetrating, perceptive and fascinating – and worth acquiring.

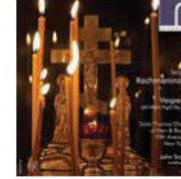
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**



**BLOW**  
 Symphony Anthems  
**Choir of New College, Oxford / Robert Quinney**

Novum  
 It's wonderful to hear New College choir – for 38 years led by Edward Higginbottom – in equally excellent form on this first disc under Robert Quinney in a programme of Blow.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



**RACHMANINOV**  
 Vespers  
**St Thomas Choir of Men and Boys / John Scott**

Resonus  
 Rachmaninov's *Vespers*, here recorded with an all-male choir with boy trebles, in a magnificent performance under the sure hand of the late John Scott.

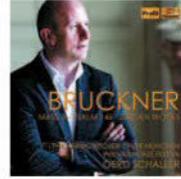
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**



**BRAHMS**  
 Vier ernste Gesänge  
**Matthias Goerne bar**  
**Christoph Eschenbach pf**  
 Harmonia Mundi

An ever-individual singer joined by an ever-engaging conductor/pianist make for a thought-provoking – and often extremely beautiful – Brahms recital.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



**BRUCKNER**  
 Mass No 3, etc  
**Philharmonie Festiva / Gerd Schaller**

Profil  
 Gerd Schaller follows his cycle of Bruckner symphonies with an excellent performance of the composer's Mass No 3, superb soloists and recording quality adding to the appeal.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



**DVD/BLU-RAY**  
**WAGNER** *Tristan und Isolde*  
 Sols incl Gould & Herlitzius;  
 Bayreuth Festival Orchestra / Christian Thielemann

DG

A significant and contemporary take on Wagner's opera, directed at Bayreuth by his great-granddaughter Katharina Wagner.

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 99**



**REISSUE/ARCHIVE**  
**JOSÉ ITURBI**  
 Solo Piano Recordings

APR

As Patrick Rucker says of this release: 'A fascinating, often surprising set that rewards repeated listening.'

▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 78**



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# FOR THE RECORD



'Injecting contemporary impulses into longstanding tradition: Gergiev presides over Munich's new label

## Munich Philharmonic launches own label with Valery Gergiev at the helm

The Munich Philharmonic has launched its own label, joining the growing ranks of orchestras and ensembles who are taking their recording activity in-house. The first two releases on MPHIL, as the label will be called, are due on September 30 and will be of Mahler's Symphony No 2 and Bruckner's Symphony No 4, both conducted by the orchestra's Music Director, Valery Gergiev.

These will be followed by up to six new releases per year, with a particular repertoire focus on German composers. The label will also make available selected performances from the archive.

'The Munich Philharmonic are incredible, talented players,' said Gergiev in a statement announcing the label. 'They combine this technical ability with a deep group experience in the music of Mahler and Bruckner.' He

continued: 'I treasure and am fortunate to have the opportunity to work with these musicians and want people around the world to hear the music we make together.'

Paul Müller, Managing Director of the Munich Philharmonic, added: 'We have been at the forefront of innovation, defining the sound of German classical music for nearly 125 years... We are fortunate to work with Maestro Valery Gergiev, one of the foremost conductors of our time who always seeks to inject contemporary artistic impulses into this orchestra's longstanding tradition.'

Gergiev is already a prolific recording artist, with two *Gramophone* Awards to his name – for Prokofiev's complete symphonies with the London Symphony Orchestra in 2007 and for the same composer's opera *The Fiery Angel* with the Kirov Chorus and Orchestra in 1996.

## A new record label for the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

Shakespeare's Globe has launched its own record label, Globe Music, with the aim of sharing the unique atmosphere of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse with an international audience. The theatre has already gained wide recognition thanks to its candlelit concert series featuring artists such as Trevor Pinnock, Jordi Savall and Mark Padmore. The new label builds on this already

broad appeal, the hope being that the venue's characteristic 'woody' acoustic will lend recordings a particularly distinctive tone.

The label's first project, a compilation of English and Chinese folksongs performed by tenor Ian Bostridge and guitarist Xuefei Yang, is ideally suited to the intimacy of the venue. Called 'Songs from Our Ancestors', the recording

### 'Diversity and Inclusion in Composition' conference

BBC Radio 3 plans to hold a one-day conference, *Diversity and Inclusion in Composition*, at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester on October 19. The aim of the conference is 'to facilitate greater inclusion in classical-music composition of composers and prospective composers from the UK's black, Asian and minority ethnic communities'.

Guest speakers at the conference include composers Errrollyn Wallen, Raymond Yiu and Priti Paintal, alongside Radio 3's Controller Alan Davey. A special edition of *In Tune*, presented by Suzy Klein, will be broadcast from the event, featuring live music and interviews with the day's participants. Applications to attend the conference are encouraged from composers, publishers, music students and orchestral, chamber and operatic managers. Visit [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) to register your interest in attending the conference.

### Scheme aims to give a boost to modern British orchestral music

A new scheme to give a boost to British orchestral music from the past 25 years has been launched by the PRS for Music Foundation. Called *Resonate*, it will encourage and support up to 12 orchestras in programming pieces that are felt to deserve wider exposure than they've so far received, through individual grants of up to £10,000. Each grant is designed to allow the orchestra to rehearse, perform and tour such a work, which can be chosen from a database comprising 524 works by 173 composers. In making an application, orchestras will need to demonstrate how they will promote their

features music spanning the centuries from the Ming Dynasty to premieres by Stephen Goss and Chen Yi, via songs by Britten and Schubert. Other planned recordings include a programme of period music arranged by Claire van Kampen, the director, composer and playwright, taken from recent Shakespeare productions on Broadway and in the West End.

chosen work and make a strong case for why it needs reviving in the first place. The scheme is a partnership between the PRS for Music Foundation, the Association of British Orchestras and BBC Radio 3, which will broadcast the pieces. Visit [resonate.abo.org.uk](http://resonate.abo.org.uk) to find out more about the scheme and to view the database of works.

### BBC Radio 3 returns to London's Southbank Centre

London's Southbank Centre will play host to BBC Radio 3 for a fortnight residency this autumn to mark the station's 70th birthday, which falls on September 29. 'Sound Frontiers' will find Radio 3 broadcasting from the Royal Festival Hall from September 23 to October 7. As well as regular programmes such as *In Tune*, *Breakfast*, *Sunday Morning*, *The Essay*, *Free Thinking* and *The Early Music Show* – all live from the pop-up studio – the festival will also include two concerts in the Philharmonia's Stravinsky series conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen (September 25 and 29) and one by the LPO under Vladimir Jurowski. *Gramophone*'s Editor-in-Chief James Jolly will be hosting *Sunday Morning* from the pop-up studio on September 25 from 9am – do drop by and say hello!

### Andris Nelsons drops out of Bayreuth Festival's Parsifal

Andris Nelsons has withdrawn from the new production of *Parsifal* at this year's Bayreuth Festival just weeks before the first performance on July 25. His management said: 'Owing to a differing approach in various matters, the atmosphere at this year's Bayreuth Festival did not develop in a mutually comfortable way for all parties.' He has been replaced by Hartmut Haenchen.



The composer and pianist Fazil Say returns to Warner Classics with a six-disc box-set in September

## Fazil Say signs exclusive recording contract with Warner Classics

Pianist and composer Fazil Say has signed a new recording contract with Warner Classics. It marks a return to the label after the Turkish-born musician made his first recordings 18 years ago for the Warner-owned Teldec label.

In the years since, he has built up a substantial reputation for himself, both as pianist and as composer. Described in *Gramophone* as 'one of the new century's leading symphonists' (April 2013), his works have been commissioned by the Salzburg Festival, the WDR and the Dortmund Konzerthaus, among others.

Say's first release under the new contract will be a comprehensive recording of Mozart's piano sonatas as a single six-disc box-set, to be issued in September. The sonatas are grouped by key in order to highlight Mozart's work with tonality across the entire collection. The pianist has written an essay accompanying the set in which he describes his relationship to the works, stating: 'The feelings that came to the fore during these recordings are some of the most special that I have experienced in my life.'

In other repertoire, *Gramophone* said about his recording of Beethoven concertos and sonatas that 'Say's entirely personal view is burning and almost palpable' (July 2014). Future recordings will range 'from Chopin to Satie, to my own music as a composer'.

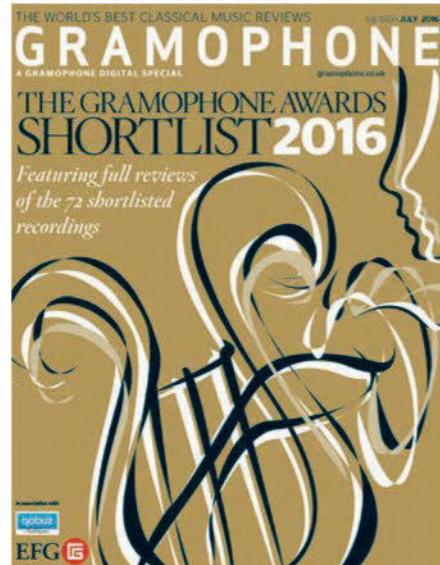
Alain Lanceron, President of Warner Classics and Erato, praised Say as 'one of the greatest pianists of our era'. He also advocated his work as composer, saying that his 'unique style creates a scintillating blend of classical and jazz influences'.

# GRAMOPHONE Online

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### FREE 'AWARDS SHORTLIST' DIGITAL MAGAZINE!

In the current issue of *Gramophone* we reveal the top three recordings in each of our 12 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards categories. But for those of you who were wondering which other recordings might have been in contention for this year's Awards, we've produced a very special – completely free! – digital magazine containing the complete reviews of the six shortlisted discs in each category. It's a valuable guide to the best classical recordings of the past 12 months and you can read it at [exacteditions.com](http://exacteditions.com) or download it using the *Gramophone* app on iTunes.



### BLOGS

In our Blogs section, you will find the latest opinions and passions of musicians, artistic directors, critics and composers, all expressed in a lively and engaging style. Recent blogs include 'Classical music gets my pulse racing' by *Gramophone* critic Andrew Mellor, and 'Music and synesthesia' by Creative Director of BitterSuite, Stephanie Singer.

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Follow us to hear about – and then discuss with our online community – the latest classical music news and anniversaries.

# *Dynamic duo*



On paper, Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis aren't the most obvious duo partners. But, finds Harriet Smith, the American violinist and British cellist share some fundamental music ideals, which proved more than useful when they recorded Brahms's Double Concerto



ISSERLIS AND BELL REHEARSE THE BRAHMS DOUBLE WITH THE ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS

Here I am, in a car with two of the world's greatest string players. And the conversation goes like this:

Steven Isserlis: 'I'm more scared of live recording than I am of studio recording.'

Joshua Bell: 'But being scared gives it an energy, an edge!'

Isserlis: 'But you enjoy that stress. I hate stress! I enjoy the music but not the stress.'

Bell: 'It certainly gets worse with age.'

Isserlis: 'I agree. Because you know how bad it can be.'

Bell: 'No, because you know how good it *should* be.'

At which point, Isserlis gleefully recites his mantra, which Bell clearly knows well: 'I hate life and life hates me.'

Two apparently more different characters you couldn't hope to meet, yet they're longtime friends both on and off the concert platform.

I first heard them tackle the Brahms Double at a BBC Prom in the year 2000. On that occasion it was in the company of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jac van Steen. Sixteen years later, we were in the more intimate confines of Cadogan Hall, with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and no conductor.

They were nearing the end of a brief but intense 11-concert tour with the ASMF, and such were their crazy schedules that the only time we could find time to talk was en route from London to Saffron Walden one gloomy January evening, which at least gave me a captive audience for a couple of hours.

We plunge straight into the Brahms Double. What is the advantage of doing such a work without a conductor? Steven Isserlis is clear: 'Everyone has to be on their mettle the whole time, so you really do end up playing it like chamber music. That's not to say that it's not wonderful to be working with a great conductor, because that brings something too. But even then, they should be part of that chamber musical experience.'

Easy enough for Isserlis to say because he's not the one doing the directing. Watching Bell at the previous evening's concert, he'd had to be pretty nifty with his directions – turning away from Isserlis to give an 'in', first with the bow, later with just a hand – demanding no mean degree of multitasking. 'There was one time when I came in wrong because

PHOTOGRAPHY: GABRIEL M. ISSERLIS for more rehearsal photos, visit [y29pauX](http://y29pauX)

argo

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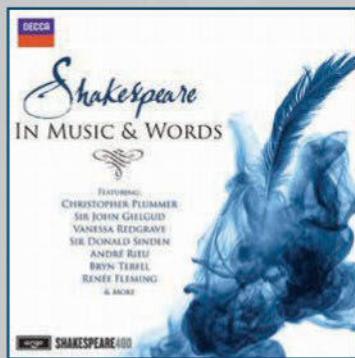
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I forgot that the violin comes in as an interruption,' admits Bell. 'That wouldn't have happened if I'd only been concentrating on the violin part. But I enjoy the fact that you're more part of everything – it feels more organic.'

This is not something you could undertake with just any orchestra: there has to be a real trust there, which is where Bell's musical directorship of the ASMF comes in. You might wonder how on earth one of the busiest violinists on the planet manages to add in an orchestra directorship, but it's simple: he does it because he wants to. Bell and the ASMF go way back, right to Bell's debut album, of the Mendelssohn E minor Concerto, recorded with Neville Marriner in 1988. 'About 12 years ago I started coming as a guest to direct the orchestra, doing smaller string pieces and then expanding to Mozart and bigger symphonies. When they asked me to become Music Director of course I said yes – it's a dream orchestra for me as I like the attitude of the players.' How would he define that attitude? 'It's simple. They really enjoy playing.'

Their enjoyment was palpable in the concert they'd just given, in which you could sense the players' total engagement with both the music and their director. Beethoven's Eighth Symphony was notably taut and springy, with an impact out of all proportion to the number of players on stage.

'Numbers and power have nothing to do with each other,' argues Bell. 'You can have a soggy performance with 100 people on stage. Or a string quartet whose playing has an incredible intensity and sense of power.' Does Bell think that's to some extent the result of a string player sitting at the back of a large orchestra feeling uninvolved? 'I've seen that my whole career; I'm always impressed by London orchestras, which still have a good attitude and are full of exciting players – especially considering the amount they work. But with some of the other major orchestras, it's almost as if you get players who are just hiding inside the ensemble. But there's nowhere to hide inside a chamber orchestra: you're exposed and that gives players more of a sense of responsibility. The ASMF are very quick to respond – in last night's Beethoven symphony, I felt I could do spur-of-the-moment things and that they'd react to that.'

So, I wonder, given they seem to have embarked on a Beethoven symphony cycle (with warm reviews for the first disc, featuring Nos 4 and 7, in 2013), how is Bell going to deal with the logistics of directing the Ninth? 'I don't know! But there's no reason why it can't work. Over the past few years I've been doing more and more without the violin so maybe there'll come a time when I'm directing without it. The more we do, the more we're involved in the language of Beethoven. We have our own way of interpreting it – some will like it, some won't – but I hope at least we could never be accused of being boring.'

Having inherited an orchestra that has a very long history with these symphonies, was there anything that Bell had initially



On the recording, Jeremy Denk (left) joins Bell and Isserlis for Brahms's B major Trio

wanted to change? 'They play so well, so it has really just been a matter of taking everything to the next level – in terms of dynamics, excitement, pushing things a little so that it's never comfortable. What I like about the orchestra is that many of the players have been in early music ensembles, so they have that kind of sensibility without getting hung up on it. In the end, the essence of what Beethoven is trying to say is not about the style, any more than a Shakespeare play is about

creating an authentic accent of the Middle Ages. It's great if you can do it, but the essence of Shakespeare is beyond all that, and it's the same with music. If the audience is too conscious of style then I think that takes away from the message.'

Returning to the subject of the Brahms Double, what credence do Bell and Isserlis give to the notion that it wouldn't have come into existence at all had it not been for Brahms's

estrangement from his longtime friend, the great violinist Joseph Joachim? As Isserlis recounts, 'The story is that he was going to write a concerto for the cellist Robert Hausmann, but he wanted to save his friendship

with Joachim so he wrote the Double.' And what of the letter to his confidante Clara Schumann in which he wrote: 'We can have some pranks with this?' Isserlis again: 'The Double is full of private messages – there are the references to the Viotti concerto [No 22] that they both loved. There's the way Brahms reworks Joachim's F–A–E ('free but lonely') motif into A–E–F. And then there's the rhythm that you find in both Brahms's Violin Concerto and Joachim's Violin Concerto "in the Hungarian manner". And a rhythm that's like the one in Joachim's *Henry IV Overture*, which Brahms had arranged for two pianos...' Bell interrupts: '...and if you turn the music upside down and squint, you can see the Virgin Mary!'

Time and again you're reminded of just how different their personalities and ways of working seem to be. Though when I suggest this, Bell takes issue: 'No. I think that in good friendships, good music-making, good relationships, you have to have a fundamental agreement on some level.' So what do they share? 'Neither of us is trying to be the loudest, the fastest,' says Isserlis. 'We really do enjoy trying to look at what the composer's sending us, interpreting that, responding to that, thinking about that, trying to understand that.' Even if you have to turn the score upside down, as Bell has suggested? Isserlis responds seriously: 'It's not like that. You just have to look at what the composer has written – it's amazing how much you miss. That's why I love working with Bob Levin; when we did the Beethoven cello sonatas together, there were so many markings that I just hadn't thought about enough. You need to keep asking the question "Why?" It can be very revealing.'

The Brahms Double is being coupled with the original version of the B major Piano Trio, for which they're being joined by Jeremy Denk. Sony's idea, I ask? They nearly choke



Bell, Denk and Isserlis rehearse the Brahms Trio in its original version which, says Isserlis, 'is more touching' than the later version

with laughter. 'Oh yes, Sony have been on at me for years to do it,' responds Bell, deadpan. So whose idea was it? Isserlis admits that it was probably his. It was he, after all, who persuaded Bell. 'You were very suspicious,' he reminds his friend and colleague. 'But then, when we came off stage after first playing it at the Wigmore Hall, you said, "I think it's better than the later version". I was very pleased! To me, the original version is more touching, more vulnerable.' And what of the fact that Clara Schumann wasn't a great fan? 'She can't be taken as an authority,' argues Isserlis. 'After all, Mendelssohn was her idol – which is why she didn't get Schumann's late music.'

*'The Brahms Double Andante is so pure – it's made of the purest interval there is. To pull it around would be like pouring treacle over roast chicken.'* – Steven Isserlis

Talking of late music, in the Cadogan Hall concert, Bell and Isserlis prefaced the Brahms with the slow movement of Schumann's Violin Concerto (a work which Bell recorded so ardently some two decades ago) but in the version that uses a coda by Britten, which he'd written in 1958 to turn the movement into a freestanding elegy for Dennis Brain. One of the most striking aspects of their performance was the way they brought out the opening duet between solo violin and *tutti* cellos, something that gets lost if the violin is overly spotlit. It was again Isserlis's detective work that led to the rediscovery of the Britten coda. 'Well, strictly speaking, I didn't discover it – I saw it in a catalogue. So I wrote to the Britten-Pears Foundation. First they thought they didn't have it. Then a year or so later I wrote again and asked if they'd found it. They said they had – and were then incredibly helpful.'

Britten adored Schumann and, to my ears, his coda worked very well. What was their take, as performers? 'I think the Britten ending is interesting,' says Isserlis, 'but it's less organic

than repeating the opening eight bars as a *da capo*.' Bell adds: 'It works even better I think if you play it as an encore after the Brahms Double, rather than before it.'

Bell is set to perform the Schumann Concerto in its entirety next season, a prospect he's looking forward to, though even today it's not a universally accepted work. 'Unfortunately some concert promoters turn it down, but I definitely want to go back to it – it's a concerto that's craving to make its mark.' Leaving aside the piece's peculiar start in life (with both Joachim and Clara Schumann keen to suppress it, a view with which Brahms initially concurred) and its relatively recent induction into the canon – *pace* certain concert promoters – does Bell think it poses particular issues for the

soloist? 'When I played it last time round I did change the passagework in some places – where it's just so awkward that it's never going to sound natural – and revoiced a few things.'

Isserlis, ever the mine of fascinating information, recalls that Schumann bought a violin before he wrote the work. 'Two days later he bought some rosin; one wonders what it sounded like before that!' Bell drags us back to the question: 'I think one of the reasons violinists don't play the concerto is because they pick it up to read through it and think it's just so awkward that they don't want to deal with it.' Isserlis adds: 'The Third Violin Sonata is pretty awkward too.' He should know, having included his own arrangement of it on his fabulous 2009 Schumann disc with Dénes Várjon.

Whatever the topic of conversation, Isserlis comes across as the great information-gatherer, whereas Bell seems far more instinctive in his approach. Clara Schumann's letters, for instance, are, for Bell, to be taken with a pinch of salt – 'You can't judge more than a century later what's really going on.' But for Isserlis, that's how you get to know a person. It may be double-edged – as in the case of Clara, whose relationship with her children was hardly straightforward – but, as Isserlis reminds us, 'Reading Beethoven's letters, you end up adoring him!'

Their interpretations of both the Brahms and Schumann pieces in the concert had possessed a distinctly Classical sensibility, in terms of tempos and reined-in rubato. Do they feel that there is a tendency these days to approach both composers with less weightiness than of old? Bell seems surprised, commenting that he thought they'd taken the *Andante* of the Brahms quite slowly. But, as Isserlis says, 'It's so pure: it's made of the purest interval there is [the perfect fourth]. To pull it around would be like pouring treacle over roast chicken. It has just got to be completely relaxed and warm-hearted. I really think that movement is the reconciliation between Brahms and Joachim. The first movement has still got a lot to sort out. And the last movement has a lot of humour in it.' Humour? Does Brahms ever really do straightforward humour? 'OK, not incredibly funny, perhaps, but lighthearted.'

While Bell's relationship with the ASMF has led him into new directorial territory, Isserlis continues with projects he has long held dear, education being central. His third book is due for release on September 1 and, unlike the previous two, this one is not for children but for young musicians. He still loves giving kids' concerts, though, not least the after-show Q&As 'because children can be so funny. And they have such an honest reaction to music.' Bell has also become involved in Turnaround Arts, a US initiative boasting some big-hitters from a wide range of artistic backgrounds, with the aim of encouraging the teaching of arts not merely as an end in itself but as part of a rounded education. Something from which our UK politicians could surely learn.

*'There was a possibility of my taking cello lessons with Piatigorsky, but all his students had to have their hair cut above their ears... So I had this dilemma...' – Steven Isserlis*

For Isserlis, the International Musicians Seminar held at Prussia Cove each April remains a vital part of his existence, and he has been Artistic Director for the past 18 years, having first gone there at the age of 15. Anyone who's ever been will know it's as inspiring for its ruggedly dramatic setting on the Atlantic coast as for the music-making itself. As Isserlis says, 'Sándor Végh started something fantastic and it has changed as little as has been possible over the past few years. The new regular on the block is Thomas Adès, who fits in brilliantly and is a great teacher.'

Ah yes, teachers. That's a subject on which they each have much to say and, for both of them, finding the right person influenced everything that happened subsequently. As Isserlis says, 'If you hadn't met Gingold, if I hadn't met Jane Cowan, we might have been in completely different positions, career-wise.' Continues Bell: 'I stayed in Indiana even though there was a lot of pressure to do the whole New York-Juilliard thing. But I loved my teacher and I couldn't understand all the fuss about Juilliard. Having said that, I still cringe when people idol-worship their teachers; Gingold was all about letting me figure things out...letting me assimilate things for myself.'

But it could have turned out differently. As Bell recalls, 'Gingold was talking about me playing for Heifetz, though he died before it could happen. But I would probably have been kicked out of Heifetz's studio – he was notorious for asking for things like eight-octave scales!' Isserlis has a similar tale: 'There was a possibility of my taking lessons with Piatigorsky, and his students would often play chamber music with Heifetz. But they had to have their hair above their ears or else Heifetz wouldn't let you in the house. So I had this dilemma of whether I'd have to get my hair cut.' Bell retorts: 'You would have cut your hair for Heifetz!' Isserlis isn't so sure. 'I don't know. I remember it was bothering me at the time!'

Two hours have elapsed and we're finally nearing Saffron Walden, but the banter continues.

Isserlis: 'What time's the rehearsal?'

Bell: 'When we get there.'

Isserlis: 'Have you practised?'

Bell: 'Yes.'

Isserlis: 'That's annoying...' **G**

*Bell and Isserlis's Sony recording of Brahms's Double Concerto with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields will be reviewed next issue*

## OPUS ARTE

### CAVALIERA RUSTICANA

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PAGLIACCI  
LEONCAVALLO  
Royal Opera House

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### THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA

BRITTEN  
Glyndebourne

This production eloquently and tastefully tackles the difficult subject, which is lent emotional weight by 'Christine Rice's grandly sung *Lucretia*, noble in tone yet tragically vulnerable' (The Guardian **★★★★**).

**DVD | BLU-RAY**



### RICHARD II

SHAKESPEARE  
Shakespeare's Globe

Charles Edwards in the title role 'brings a lovely light touch to the black comedy of Richard's blithe self-centredness' (The Independent). His highly accomplished performance 'movingly graduates into tragedy in the final act' endowing the play with 'exceptional variety of texture' (The Guardian **★★★★**).

**DVD**

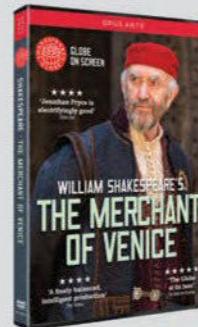


### THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

SHAKESPEARE  
Shakespeare's Globe

Jonathan Pryce delivers a Shylock of weight, gravity and considerable complexity' who 'combines the roles of social victim and domestic tyrant' in 'a fine, deeply considered performance that highlights Shylock's riven nature' (The Guardian **★★★★**).

**DVD**





# GETTING A KICK OUT OF COPLAND

For John Wilson, Cole Porter and Copland go hand in hand, finds Kate Molleson as she meets the conductor during recording sessions for his second Copland disc on Chandos

**T**he byways of music have always fascinated me,' says conductor John Wilson, picking up the score to Aaron Copland's Second Symphony and half-studying the typeface while he talks. 'Back at college when all my friends were getting in a lather about Mahler, I was more into Lord Berners and bits of Walton that people hadn't heard for years.'

Wilson is a self-styled anomaly in the conducting world. He's utterly serious about light music, cheerfully and loquaciously Geordie in a profession that traditionally trades on pomp and grand personas. He's as fastidious about authentic performance practice as any Baroque specialist, but the repertoire to which

he applies those principles of original instrumentation and historically informed interpretations is one that only recently earned enough clout to make it into the Proms. If the classical music world now shows respect for the film scores of vintage MGM musicals, that shift in attitude can be largely attributed to two decades (and counting) of championing by Wilson himself. Because since founding the John Wilson Orchestra in 1994, his dedication to the music of Hollywood's golden age has achieved a two-way thing. On the one side he has enticed fans of light music into the concert hall. On the other, his attention to detail and the calibre of his handpicked band have brought new status to music once dismissed as gushy, saccharine and camp.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU/LEBRECHT MUSIC &amp; ARTS

By giving his own name to his specialist orchestra, Wilson determined the repertoire that he would be best associated with. And yet in his other conducting positions – Principal Conductor of the Royal Northern Sinfonia and the RTE Concert Orchestra Dublin, newly appointed Associate Guest Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra – he is keen to emphasise his aptitude for broader repertoire. ‘I always took an interest in that exciting time after the First World War,’ he tells me, by way of example. ‘And I probably have the biggest satisfaction from getting my hands on Brahms.’ His desert-island conducting choices? ‘Oooh, I’d take the Elgar symphonies, the Vaughan Williams symphonies, possibly American music by Copland, John Adams, Roy Harris.’ His latest recording is the second in a series of Copland orchestral works with the BBC Philharmonic for Chandos – and there isn’t much trace of light music in the jagged edges and sharp punches of the Second Symphony, the Organ Symphony or the *Symphonic Ode*.

Wilson maintains that there has never been a division in his mind between music that is ‘light’ or music that is ‘serious’, but accepts that this isn’t the case for everyone. ‘The root of my passion is my love of songs,’ he says. ‘Songs of Britten or Ireland or Cole Porter. Ella and Frank singing Gershwin. I just assumed it would all be part of my repertoire and I never put anything in a ghetto. So when we [the John Wilson Orchestra] did our MGM Prom in 2009 and a telly audience of 3.5 million saw that really serious research had been applied to those scores, I think that’s when I felt a big shift in attitudes.

My orchestra had spent 15 years learning how to play that music. I put together the performing editions just as any musicologist would prepare Handel or Vivaldi. Maybe it was because it was the Proms, maybe because it was an orchestra full of incredibly serious players, but somehow we managed to get a lot of people who wouldn’t normally go near that repertoire to sit up and listen.’

*‘Some of my professors were sniffy about light music because it was the pop music of their youth but, in my generation, we can see that a Cole Porter song is as serious in its craft as a Brahms symphony’ – John Wilson*

Wilson was born in Gateshead on Tyneside in 1972 – which, if you do the maths, made him just 22 when he founded the John Wilson Orchestra. ‘The whole light music repertoire belonged to a couple of generations above me,’ he says. ‘This was the music they danced to, courted to, got married to. A lot of people have a nostalgic connection to it. Some of my professors were sniffy because they were too close to it, because it was the pop music of their youth and therefore something to be scorned at, but that doesn’t exist for my generation. We can see that a Cole Porter song is as serious in its craft as a Brahms symphony.’ That’s the kind of bold claim that earned him a few raised eyebrows as a student of composition and conducting at the Royal College of Music, where teachers told him he should be immersing himself in ‘proper’ compositional techniques.

But even then he already knew exactly what he wanted to get from sitting through those classes in advanced orchestration, exactly what repertoire he wanted to use those tools to excavate. ‘I’ve produced all my own parts for the Strauss waltzes with all the repeats written out. Heck – I just made the print bigger and suddenly orchestras enjoy playing them because it’s not a panic trying to find which bloody repeat to play!’ Wilson is pragmatic about such unromantic things as notation size and syntax. ‘If the music is printed too small,’ he shrugs, ‘half of your brain gets used up just trying to decipher the stuff. I want my players to be totally involved in the music. The librarian of any orchestra,’ he adds, ‘is a crucial figure. The unsung hero.’

We’re talking at MediaCity in Salford, where Wilson has just conducted a lunchtime concert with the BBC Philharmonic and is preparing for an afternoon recording session as part of his second Copland disc. Repertoire on the first instalment of the Wilson/BBC Phil Chandos series included such populist fare as *Appalachian Spring*, *Rodeo* and *Fanfare for the Common Man*. The recording was an Editor’s Choice in *Gramophone*’s March 2016 issue, with Christian Hoskins praising the ‘superb playing from the BBC Philharmonic... The three ballets receive strongly characterised interpretations, as piquant and affecting in the slower passages as they are punchy and ebullient in the faster ones.’

By contrast, Wilson describes the music on the second disc as ‘hard as nails’ and ‘totally uncompromising’ in comparison. ‘Copland had created this instantly identifiable sound – the “wide-open-spaces” sound that we all know and love. Nobody had done it before and suddenly loads of other American composers started imitating him. But he was also a proper composer, ferociously accomplished, who developed ideas out of very small cells. He had worked hard as a student of Nadia Boulanger to get his technique into shape.’ For today’s session, he’s recording Copland’s 15-minute Second Symphony of 1933,



also known as the *Short Symphony*. 'He worked hard every day of his life, and he knew about concision,' says Wilson. 'The Second Symphony is compact and concise, which is never a bad thing...He stops once he's said enough!'

Wilson is sanguine about the particular challenges of bringing this compact, astringent score to life. 'I've been trying to analyse what makes it quite so difficult,' he says. 'There are plenty of pieces with changing time signatures and rhythmic complexities: that's meat and drink to orchestral players. But with Copland's Second Symphony there isn't a single extra note in the score. It's like Mozart or Rossini or Mendelssohn in that it's got to be so perfect for it to work. There's nowhere to hide.' He looks up and grins. 'It's the musical equivalent of standing in the middle of Oxford Street in your underpants!'

*If I'm conducting a Fred Astaire routine, those rhythms have to be executed with style, the string-playing has to be faultless, the brass-playing has to have swagger...None of this would do any harm in Copland'*

But *should* this music sound perfect? Has one side-effect of Copland's wide-open-spaces popularity been a performance tradition that flattens out the edges, softens the harshness? 'Possibly,' Wilson acknowledges. 'And actually you do want a bit of tussle. We need to play the music in, until that tussle becomes something we can do with conviction and style rather than with difficulty. But no, I don't think that these pieces – the *Ode*, the 'Variations', the Second Symphony – I don't think they've been played enough for any performance tradition to have been built up. I'm hoping that by recording them now we can be new advocates.'

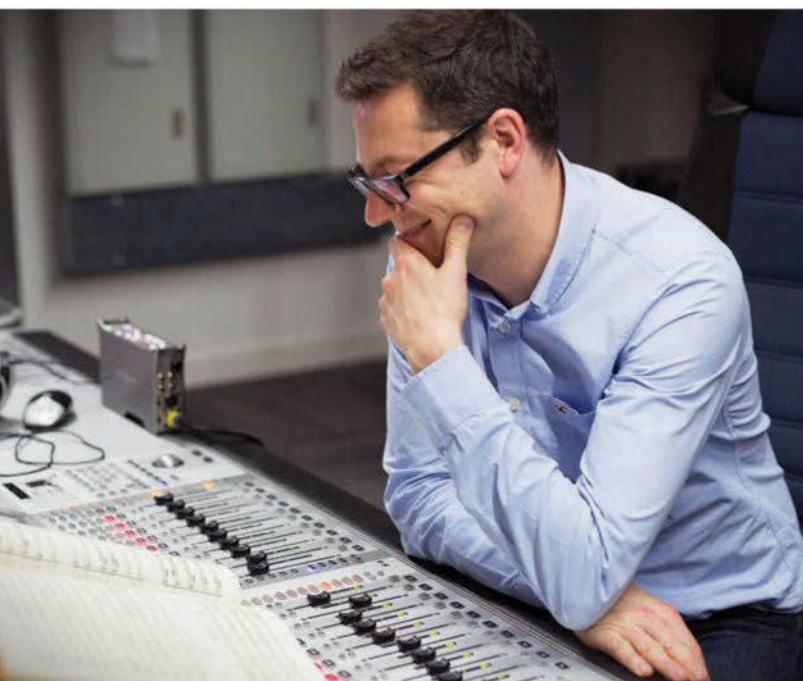
Since lunchtime Wilson has changed out of concert dress and into his civvies – jeans, Adidas trainers, untucked checked shirt, thick-rimmed square black glasses. That casualness transfers to the way he works with the orchestra, too. During the session he is brisk, friendly, funny, courteous. He doesn't waste time and he seems to know what he's looking for: a sound that is bright and punchy, rhythms that are super-crisp, and projection that is sharp-edged, almost metallic. He also seems to know how to get it quickly, with minimal instructions. The physical gestures he makes are notably low-key, and when the music hits a catchy rhythm he begins to wiggle. He talks with a smile but he doesn't crack many jokes.

He's not an incessant stopper, either: he lets the orchestra play for a good five minutes before interrupting. '*Legato*, eloquent, bright,' he tells the strings. 'But make sure the sound is switched on. It lacks a little ardour. It's all rather surface. The sound needs more weight.' He reaches a passage where the violins and violas divide desk by desk. 'We need very fast, very narrow vibrato on each note. Really brilliant. What you just did? That was fine, but it sounded just ordinary.' Later he looks for the sweet spot of clarity and charm. 'Can it be *marcato* and still melodious?' he asks. 'Can it be *legato* and still have clean definition on the lines?' He turns to the violins: 'Go for a really high-risk top note. A bit of scratch and strain in the sound will do no harm at all.'

During the break I ask whether the lushness and brightness so audible in the first of his Copland discs for Chandos have influenced the sound he is going for in the Second Symphony. 'Sure, a little,' Wilson replies. 'Probably most of all in the slow movement. Though I don't think of it as a luscious sound so much as a very clean sound. The way he scores with gaps in between high notes, low notes and middle notes...We've been talking a lot about gaps. So much of his rhythmic trickery comes where you *don't* play.'

It is fascinating listening to Wilson work on thorny mid-century symphonic repertoire while bearing in mind his bent for MGM heritage. Does he hear any parallels between the two? Does the style he's developed with the John Wilson Orchestra filter into the work he's doing here? 'Well, Copland was born in 1900 and raised in Brooklyn. There's no chance he could have not absorbed influences from Harlem, from Gershwin. It's all there in the music. Put it this way: if I'm conducting a Fred Astaire dance routine, those rhythms have to be executed with great style. The string-playing has to be faultless, delivered with real ardour and perfection. The brass-playing has to have a certain swagger. It has to be cleanly articulated with a ton of accents. And none of those characteristics would do any harm in *Rodeo* – they wouldn't do much harm in *The Rite of Spring*, either. Basically we're talking here about playing with commitment.'

And what about the 'Americanness' of the sound? Regardless of whether each Copland score has gathered its own performance tradition, does Wilson try to capture attributes of a quintessentially American orchestral sound? 'Possibly,' he replies. 'Copland's ballet scores are best known in the New York Philharmonic versions conducted by Leonard Bernstein. The thing that stands out for me there is the trumpet sound: totally ballsy – that supreme confidence of all the New York brass playing right down the line, so super-confident and spirited but refined, too, not just a load of machismo. There's a certain vigour to those Wild West pieces, a certain swagger. Which is not the first adjective you'd use to describe British brass-playing. Here, we specialise in more gentlemanly brass-playing: warm, neat, very accurate.'



Focused: John Wilson listens to a take during the Copland recording sessions

The aim, he stresses, is not to try to imitate that vintage American sound but, at the same time, 'there are stylistic parameters that we have to try to fulfil. It would be a mistake to play these pieces in a completely British way – we have to just go for it. And actually, Copland doesn't give us much choice. He marks very clearly what he wants, which means that with a lot of this music we're leaving the arena of personal taste and entering into being either right or wrong. With the symphonies, if we play 90 per cent of what's on the page, then most of the work is done for us. Then we get the luxury of refining the sound, of taking the music to places it has never gone before.'

*'With Copland's Second Symphony, there's nowhere to hide. It's the musical equivalent of standing in the middle of Oxford Street in your underpants!'*

Meanwhile, Wilson is also introducing his own audiences – the mass following he has built via his John Wilson Orchestra – to music they may not have previously encountered. I suggest that the gentler start to the Copland series might have helped to lure in some listeners, and he laughs. 'Well, there is a responsibility there,' he says. 'People are paying money so it is really important not to betray their trust and go too far. In general I hope I can programme in a way that takes the audience to places that they'll enjoy when they get there. The language of a Judy Garland song is exactly the same as the language of a Rachmaninov symphony, so I feel great about making that leap. Navigating from MGM musicals to Korngold film scores to Copland's marvellously thrilling Organ Symphony? Sure, that is a nice little trip! And if we play with enough conviction, if we are totally convinced ourselves, then I am sure that people will be happy to come with us.' **G**  
John Wilson's second Copland instalment on Chandos is reviewed in the next issue of Gramophone

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU, ANDREW PRICE

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# Sleepless in Seattle

**T**hough its home city is perched in a distant corner of the continent, in recent seasons the Seattle Symphony has found itself increasingly at the centre of attention. The orchestra's commission of *Become Ocean* from John Luther Adams resulted in a Pulitzer Prize for the composer in 2014 and its first-ever Grammy Award in 2015 (in the category Best Contemporary Classical Composition). Mega pop star Taylor Swift subsequently announced that the recording inspired her to make a \$50,000 donation to the orchestra. Earlier this year, violinist Augustin Hadelich garnered a second Grammy for the Seattle Symphony's discography when his performance was singled out for Best Classical Instrumental Solo on the orchestra's recording of Henri Dutilleux's *L'arbre des songes*.

'It's an exciting time to be here,' said Ludovic Morlot during a break from a recording session for Dutilleux's short violin work, *Sur le même accord*, for the third and final volume of the Seattle Symphony's cycle of the French composer's orchestral works. Since he began his tenure as Music Director in 2011, the 42-year-old Lyon-born conductor has pushed the

Since joining the Seattle Symphony in 2011, conductor Ludovic Morlot has worked tirelessly to hone its identity for the 21st century – most recently with Dutilleux, finds Thomas May

orchestra into the forefront of American ensembles, engaged in redefining what a 21st-century orchestra should be. In addition to the essential questions about repertoire and

the role of new music, this has meant exploring the orchestra's relationship to a changing audience and to a city whose feverish pace of growth is being fuelled by jobs in the high-tech sector.

Simon Woods, the orchestra's President and CEO, also began his tenure in 2011 and has teamed up with the conductor to implement a shared vision of innovating the orchestra's identity. 'When I came,' says Woods, a Londoner who started his career as a record producer for EMI Classics, 'the big paradox was that the Seattle Symphony had become known as relatively inward-looking and conservative for a city that was outward-looking and progressive'.

As a guiding principle, Woods and Morlot were determined 'to remake the orchestra in the image of Seattle and its values as a centre of innovation, a progressive, forward-looking city that has changed the way we interact with the world, from Boeing to Starbucks and Amazon.' That task has extended both to the orchestra's artistic agenda and to its sense of responsibility

to the city. As Woods says, through education and outreach programmes as well as providing various marginalised communities access to performances, 'We've been looking at ways to give back to the city. Those two stories – being forward-looking but also outward-looking and community-focused – have driven almost everything.'

Along with the acclaim, the new attention directed at the orchestra has generated controversy. Sonic Evolution, an initiative launched during Morlot's first season, presents annual collaborative projects between the orchestra and creative partners beyond the classical realm that represent other areas of Seattle's musical legacy. The Sonic Evolution concert in 2014 included 'Baby Got Back', a 1992 hit by Sir Mix-A-Lot, performed by the legendary local rapper and the Seattle Symphony. A video of the event went viral on YouTube, prompting one critic to write that the orchestra had surrendered to 'dumb-down demands'.

'We've done collaborations with rock groups like Pearl Jam, and we've also presented challenging avant-garde pieces by Stockhausen and Scelsi,' says Woods. 'The point about it is, we are not making value judgements. We're saying that the musical world is a great and rich one, and that the 21st-century orchestra should reflect all of those worlds.'

*'We wanted to remake the orchestra in the image of Seattle and its values as a centre of innovation – a progressive city that has changed how we interact with the world'*

– Simon Woods, President and CEO of Seattle Symphony

Woods is also referring to another initiative that he and Morlot launched when they both came on board in 2011: the late-evening concerts under the umbrella name [UNTITLED] which take place several times each season in the carpeted grand lobby just outside the Seattle Symphony's concert hall, the focus being on Modernist classics and contemporary experimental music. Both these programmes attract audiences who don't normally attend the main concert series. The late-evening concerts draw on a populist base across a wide age range, while Sonic Evolution is a magnet for younger, hipster art lovers.

While eye-catching, the Sir Mix-A-Lot adventure represented only the merest sliver of the orchestra's overall activity, a single programme in addition to the two-dozen-or-so weeks of traditional classical programming that comprise the core of a typical season. There's been no rationing of Beethoven for example – the orchestra is currently at the midpoint of a two-year cycle of the complete symphonies and piano concertos.

What *has* become a signature of the Morlot era is thought-provoking juxtaposition of the familiar classics with composers overlooked in the orchestra's past: for example, Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto coupled with the orchestra's first performance of *Sinfonia*, Berio's post-serial landmark. This programming philosophy also informs some of the content choices made for the orchestra's in-house recording label, Seattle Symphony Media, which launched in 2014.

For his inaugural season, Morlot recalls, the organisation introduced a new logo: 'Listen boldly'. The point, he explains, was not to warn the loyal base of older audience members 'that they would now have to put up with a lot of new music. It was actually a challenge to the young crowd who had never been to a symphony concert, to try out something different, which might for them be Beethoven.' Connecting to a young,

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Sardinian saxophonist Andrea Mocci and Japanese pianist Megumi Nakanomori form Duo Vagues. Florent Schmitt's Légende is at the heart of this, their debut album, and inspired their name, its continuous motion evoking "vagues" – waves. Duo Vagues takes us on a voyage through waves of sound in a dazzling array of works, from the clarity of classicism to the rich depths of jazz, and beyond...



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progressive audience – one that is highly educated but has reduced leisure time and little exposure to classical music – faces formidable obstacles. Yet Morlot is convinced that ‘if you play at a high artistic level and introduce things through subtle repetition, then the audiences will respond and pay attention, even if they don’t know how a piece works.’

The music of Dutilleux has provided a fascinating vehicle for Morlot to explore these ideas, as well as to establish a fresh rapport with the orchestra itself. When he arrived in Seattle, Morlot recalls, the orchestra played well, ‘but had a certain heaviness of sound. I wanted to try to work on making it lighter and increasing its flexibility.’ He says he could have chosen any number of composers who had been similarly neglected in the Seattle Symphony’s lengthy past (the orchestra was founded in 1903) but there was a sense of urgency about Dutilleux, whom Morlot had got to know personally in the composer’s later years (he died in 2013). ‘He was still alive but of course we didn’t know for how long, and he was able to listen to some of the recordings, so it was possible to get his feedback and approval.’

Under the long tenure of Morlot’s predecessor, Gerard Schwarz, who was music director from 1985 to 2011 – and whom the French conductor credits with building up the orchestra’s virtuosity and with securing its acoustically superior home in Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle – the Seattle Symphony became especially known for its interpretation of a certain area of American repertoire and Russian music. Other areas, such as the French tradition and important developments in contemporary American and European music, had received little attention. With Dutilleux, Morlot found a composer whose music was not only of high quality, but proved useful, according to Woods, ‘as a tool to get the orchestra players to listen to each other intently, to phrase carefully, to think with precision about nuances and balances of sound.’

The world of Dutilleux was unfamiliar at first, and it took patient application (akin to the Cartesian process), paring it down to fundamentals and then painstakingly building it up again into a new, complex body. ‘How to introduce a composer like this isn’t just a question for the audience but for the players as well,’ says Morlot. ‘They weren’t comfortable with this music at first. This was a journey that lasted years. The real turning point was clearly when they performed *Métaboles*. Now they



Ludovic Morlot in conversation with the late French composer Henri Dutilleux

*‘The players weren’t comfortable with Dutilleux’s music at first. This was a journey that lasted years, but now they are fluent in the language and really love it’ – Ludovic Morlot*

are fluent in the language and really love it.’

Calling Dutilleux ‘the Alban Berg of France’ in view of his attractive harmonic language, Morlot views the composer as a key link between the French tradition and Modernism. In his interpretations, Morlot tends to take a more pointillist approach, allowing the accretion of minute details to resound to maximal effect. With the launch of the Seattle Symphony’s self-produced label, he and the orchestra have been able to document their mutual exploration of his work – including the aura of discovery that results from a live performance.

While the orchestra had previously developed a reputation for its prodigious output of recordings in the

Schwarz years, these were mostly recorded in studio conditions. That model, for Morlot, was problematic. ‘You should play the work in concert, hone it, take it on tour, and come back and record it live,’ he says. ‘You need that excitement. In the history of recordings, I think the really interesting ones are done live.’

Both Morlot and Woods credit sound engineer Dmitriy Lipay for creating a signature sound. ‘We wanted something very sensuous and beautiful that reflected the acoustics of the hall but that was also very natural and not engineered to within an inch of its life,’ says Woods. ‘I worked for almost 10 years in the record business and know how lucky we are to have a world-class sound engineer.’

Seattle Symphony Media’s recordings have included some non-live ones, particularly shorter works that are difficult to programme in a concert, but the independence of an in-house label has afforded the orchestra the flexibility to embark on larger cycles, such as the Dutilleux project and another one on Ives, but also allows them to make spur-of-the-moment decisions when a concert has come off especially well.

Woods points out that one mark of a 21st-century orchestra is the ability ‘to take control of its destiny in recordings. We

are no longer subject to the whim of a major label and its catalogue needs, but can reflect who we are in what we choose to release.’

And for Morlot, that question of identity indicates how the Seattle Symphony truly is a microcosm of its home city: ‘As Seattle expands and searches for its identity, so the orchestra is also redefining its role in the world at large.’

*The Seattle Symphony’s latest recordings will be reviewed in the next issue of Gramophone*



The Seattle Symphony Orchestra performs Dutilleux’s *Timbres, espace, mouvement*



# GRAMOPHONE

## CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2016

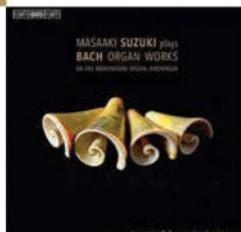
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# THE SHORTLIST

*It's been a very strong year for classical recording, and our critics have enjoyed voting on the many hundreds of releases we considered for this year's Awards. We can now reveal the top three recordings in each category. On August 22 – at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) – we announce the winners in each category. Then, on September 15, we name our Recording of the Year. But for now, just enjoy exploring these 36 fine releases!*

### BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL

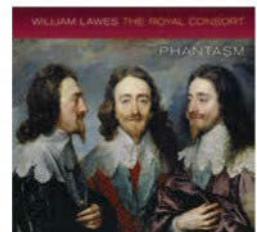
- **JS Bach** Organ Works  
**Masaaki Suzuki** org
- **Biber** Rosary Sonatas  
**Rachel Podger** vn, et al
- **Lawes** The Royal Consorts  
**Phantasm**



BIS F BIS 2111 (10/15)



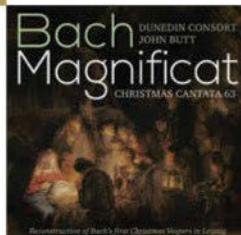
Channel Classics F ② BIS 37315 (10/15)



Linn F ② BIS CKD470 (6/15)

### BAROQUE VOCAL

- **JS Bach** Magnificat  
**Sols; Dunedin Consort / John Butt**
- **Monteverdi** Madrigali, Vol 1 – Cremona  
**Les Arts Florissants / Paul Agnew**
- **'Le Concert Royal de la Nuit'**  
**Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé**



Linn F BIS CKD469 (12/15)



Les Arts Florissants F ② BIS AF005 (7/15)



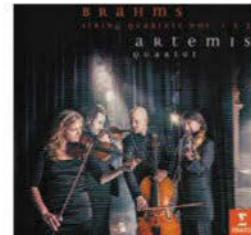
Harmonia Mundi F ② BIS HMC95 2223/4 (11/15)

## CHAMBER

- **Berg** Lyric Suite **Wellesz** Sonnets for Elizabeth Barrett Browning **Zeisl** Komm, süßer Tod  
**Renée Fleming** sop **Emerson Quartet**
- **Brahms** String Quartets Nos 1 & 3  
**Artemis Quartet**
- **Tippett** String Quartets Nos 1-5  
**Heath Quartet**



Decca Ⓜ  
478 8399DH (10/15)



Erato Ⓜ  
2564 61266-3 (10/15)



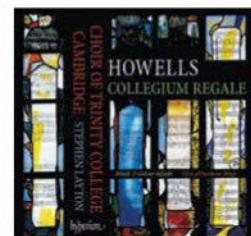
Wigmore Hall Live Ⓜ ②  
WHLIVE0080 (3/16)

## CHORAL

- **Bliss** Morning Heroes. Hymn to Apollo  
**BBC SO & Chorus / Sir Andrew Davis**
- **Howells** Collegium Regale  
**Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge / Stephen Layton** with **Eleanor Kornas, Owain Park** org
- **Schoenberg** Gurrelieder  
**Sols; Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Markus Stenz**



Chandos Ⓜ  
CHSA5159 (11/15)



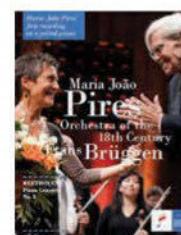
Hyperion Ⓜ  
CDA68105 (4/16)



Hyperion Ⓜ ②  
CDA68081/2 (8/15)

## CONCERTO

- **Beethoven** Piano Concerto No 3  
**Maria João Pires** pf **Orchestra of the 18th Century / Frans Brüggen**
- **Britten, Korngold** Violin Concertos  
**Vilde Frang** vn **Frankfurt RSO / James Gaffigan**
- **Rachmaninov** 'Variations'  
**Danill Trifonov** pf **Philadelphia Orchestra / Yannick Nézet-Séguin**



NIFC Ⓜ DVD  
NIFCDVDO05 (7/15)



Warner Classics Ⓜ  
2564 600921 (2/16)



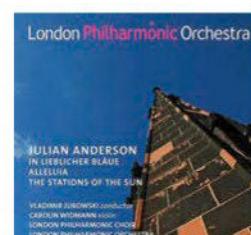
DG Ⓜ  
479 4970GH (9/15)

## CONTEMPORARY

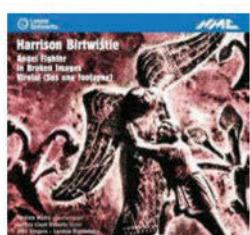
- **Abrahamsen** let me tell you  
**Barbara Hannigan** sop **BRSO / Andris Nelsons**
- **Anderson** In lieblicher Bläue. Alleluia, etc  
**Carolin Widmann** vn **LPO & Choir / Vladimir Jurowski**
- **Birtwistle** Angel Fighter. In Broken Images, etc  
**Sols; BBC Singers; London Sinfonietta / David Atherton**



Winter & Winter Ⓜ  
910 232-2 (3/16)



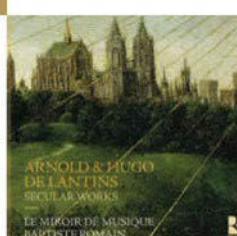
LPO Ⓜ  
LPO0089 (4/16)



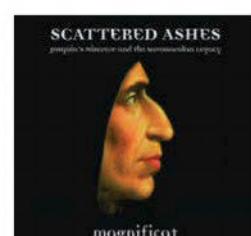
NMC Ⓜ  
NMCD211 (7/15)

## EARLY MUSIC

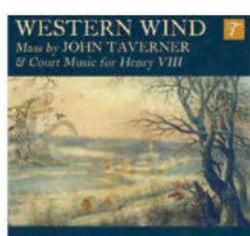
- **Arnold & Hugo de Lantins** Secular Works  
**Le Miroir de Musique / Baptiste Romain** vielle, bagpipes
- 'Scattered Ashes'  
**Magnificat / Philip Cave**
- 'Western Wind'  
**Taverner Choir & Players / Andrew Parrott**



Ricercar Ⓜ  
RIC365 (4/16)



Linn Ⓜ ②  
CKD517 (3/16)



Avie Ⓜ  
AV2352 (5/16)

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## Disc of the Month

### Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette, etc.

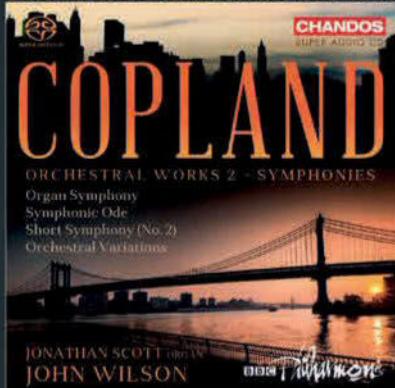
Sir Andrew Davis / BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra

*Roméo et Juliette* • *Marche troyenne* • *Chasse royale et Orage*

On this new Berlioz SACD, the BBC SO and its Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death by offering as you have never heard them: the third symphony, *Roméo et Juliette*, and excerpts from his largest opera, *Les Troyens*; a 'magical revelation... that wrought shivers' (Bachtrack), in which 'one could feel the instant rightness of the sonorous imagery Berlioz devises' (*The Sunday Times*).

CHSA 5169(2)

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### Copland Orchestral Works, Vol. 2

John Wilson / BBC Philharmonic

After a 'superb' volume of the ballet music ('Orchestral Choice', *BBC Music*) John Wilson and the BBC Philharmonic here present the first volume of Copland's symphonic output. It is a unique collection of vivid and energetic works, including the Organ Symphony, *Orchestral Variations*, and the lesser-known *Short Symphony* (No. 2).

CHSA 5171

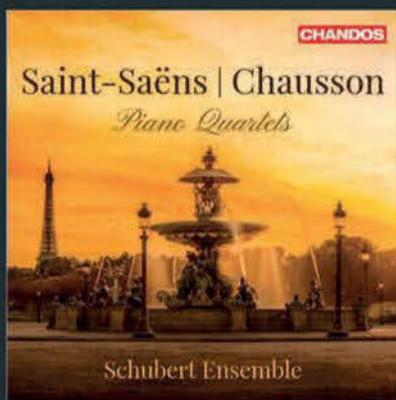


### Après un rêve a Fauré Recital, Vol. 1

Louis Lortie

This album, the first in the series, travels through Fauré's various creative periods, from easily appealing early pieces such as the *Pavane* and the *mélodie* 'Après un rêve' to the late and unjustly neglected *Préludes*, a masterpiece of condensed harmonic and melodic audacity.

CHAN 10915

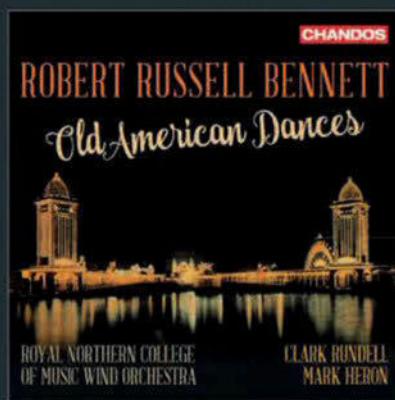


### Saint-Saëns / Chausson Piano Quartets

Schubert Ensemble

In Saint-Saëns's witty and elegant Quartet in B flat major and Chausson's relatively unknown, rhapsodic, and full-blooded Quartet in A major, the thirty-year-old Schubert Ensemble here reveals two extremes of the French romantic chamber music repertoire, a rare, attractive, and diverse programme.

CHAN 10914



### Robert Russell Bennett Wind Band Music

RNCM Wind Orchestra /  
Clark Rundell / Mark Heron

The RNCM Wind Orchestra under its director Clark Rundell and guest conductor Mark Heron dedicate its energy and brilliance to a uniquely enjoyable programme of works by Robert Russell Bennett, best known for his orchestrations for 300-plus musicals, but unjustly less so for the original compositions featured here.

CHAN 10916

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## INSTRUMENTAL

- **Bach, Beethoven, Rzewski** Variations  
Igor Levit *pf*
- **Ravel** Complete Works for Solo Piano  
Bertrand Chamayou *pf*
- **D Scarlatti** 18 Sonatas  
Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*



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Erato Ⓛ ②  
2564 60268-1 (3/16)



BIS Ⓛ ②  
BIS2138 (4/16)

## OPERA

- **Tchaikovsky** The Queen of Spades  
Sols; BRSO and Chorus / Mariss Jansons
- **Verdi** Aida  
Sols; Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Sir Antonio Pappano
- **Zandonai** Francesca da Rimini  
Sols; Freiburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Fabrice Bollon



BR-Klassik Ⓛ ③  
900129 (A/15)



Warner Classics Ⓛ ③  
2564 61066-3 (A/15)



CPO Ⓛ ②  
CPO777 960-2 (1/16)

## ORCHESTRAL

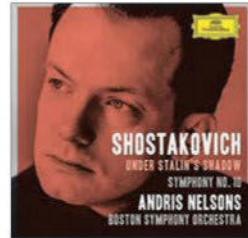
- **Dutilleux** Symphony No 2, Métaboles, etc  
Augustin Hadelich *vn* Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Ludovic Morlot
- **Elgar** Symphony No 1  
Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim
- **Shostakovich** Symphony No 10  
Boston Symphony Orchestra / Andris Nelsons



Seattle Symphony Media Ⓛ SSM1007 (10/15)



Decca Ⓛ 478 9353DH (5/16)



DG Ⓛ 479 5059GH (8/15)

## RECITAL

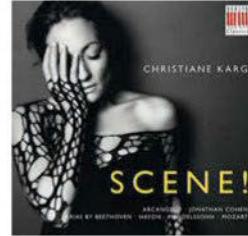
- **Mozart** 'The Weber Sisters'  
Sabine Devieilhe *sop* Arnaud de Pasquale *pf, org*  
Ensemble Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon
- **'Arie napoletane'**  
Max Emanuel Cencic *counterten*  
Il Pomo d'Oro / Maxim Emelyanychev
- **'Scene!'**  
Christiane Karg *sop*  
Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen



Erato Ⓛ 2564 60758-4 (11/15)



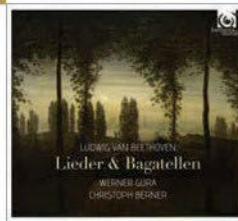
Decca Ⓛ 478 8422DH (12/15)



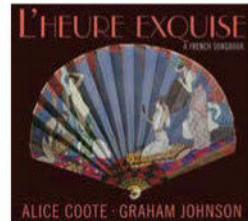
Berlin Classics Ⓛ 0300646BC (7/15)

## SOLO VOCAL

- **Beethoven** 'Lieder & Bagatellen'  
Werner Güra *ten* Christoph Berner *pf*
- **'L'heure exquise'** A French Songbook  
Alice Coote *mez* Graham Johnson *pf*
- **'Néère'** Mélodies by Chausson, Duparc, Hahn *et al*  
Véronique Gens *sop* Susan Manoff *pf*



Harmonia Mundi Ⓛ HMC90 2217 (A/15)



Hyperion Ⓛ CDA67962 (5/15)



Alpha Ⓛ ALPHA215 (1/16)

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# SEASON PREVIEW 2016-17

Our comprehensive guide to the new concert season, featuring the best live classical music events and opera productions from across the UK, Europe and North America

## UNITED KINGDOM



Next season, Kirill Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra will place Elgar's music within the context of the European Romantic tradition

### Academy of Ancient Music

Celebration and directorial debuts are the topical threads of the AAM's season, with eight concerts at the Barbican Centre where the orchestra is Associate Ensemble. Richard Egarr celebrates 10 years as Artistic Director, opening the season with a semi-staged production of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*. Other highlights include Jordi Savall making his AAM debut, and regular AAM collaborator James Gilchrist directing the ensemble for the first time. Throughout the season the orchestra celebrates the 450th

anniversary of Monteverdi's birth, culminating in a performance of the composer's 1610 *Vespers* to close the season.

[aam.co.uk](http://aam.co.uk)

### Academy of St Martin in the Fields

The Barbican hosts a Beethoven piano concerto cycle with Murray Perahia, whilst Cadogan Hall events include Music Director Joshua Bell playing and directing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, and Swedish clarinettist Martin Fröst playing/directing Copland's jazz-

influenced Clarinet Concerto. Then, the Royal Albert Hall is the setting for the world premiere performance of *Amadeus Live*, a special screening of the 1984 Oscar-winning film *Amadeus* with live soundtrack.

[asmf.org](http://asmf.org)

### Aurora Orchestra

Aurora Orchestra continues its 'Orchestral Theatre' series at Southbank Centre and on tour throughout the UK, including collaborations with playwright Laura Wade and writer Edmund de Waal, and Brahms's First Symphony,

delivered entirely from memory. Meanwhile at its Kings Place home, the orchestra picks up its five-year journey through a complete cycle of Mozart's piano concertos, with guests including Cédric Tiberghien, Imogen Cooper and Shai Wosner.

[auroraorchestra.com](http://auroraorchestra.com)

### BBC Concert Orchestra

Events in Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall include a concert programmed by and for young people as part of Southbank's WHY festival, live accompaniment of the

1916 film *Battle of the Somme* with Laura Rossi's score, and concerts in the EFG London Jazz Festival with Laura Jurd, Daniel Herskedal and Francesco Tristano.

[bbc.co.uk/concertorchestra](http://bbc.co.uk/concertorchestra)

#### BBC National Orchestra of Wales

BBC National Orchestra of Wales & Chorus begins 2016-2017 with Xian Zhang's inaugural concert as Principal Guest Conductor. The theme of storytelling runs throughout the season with Stravinsky's interpretations of Russian folk tales, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* and Bach's *St John Passion*. Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård continues his Mahler cycle with the Sixth Symphony, and the orchestra explores Welsh music foundations, with a series celebrating the music of Alun Hoddinott, William Mathias and Daniel Jones.

[bbc.co.uk/bbcnow](http://bbc.co.uk/bbcnow)

#### BBC Philharmonic

The season reflects on the power of music to effect change, opening with Haydn's *The Creation*, and closing in June 2017 with Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. Other concerts include major groundbreaking works such as Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* alongside remarkable pieces from today's composers, including Kaija Saariaho and the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. Great British music will be championed throughout the season, a highlight of which will be the new cello concerto from Composer in Association, Mark Simpson.

[bbc.co.uk/philharmonic](http://bbc.co.uk/philharmonic)

#### BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Thomas Dausgaard's first season as Chief Conductor sees the launch of *Scottish Inspirations*, five new BBC commissions inspired by Scottish culture, including works from Helen Grime, Sally Beamish and Jay Capperauld. Other highlights include a recreation in Glasgow of Beethoven's famous '1808 Academy Concert', an Elgar symphony cycle and the start of a two-season Tippett symphony cycle.

[bbc.co.uk/bbcssso](http://bbc.co.uk/bbcssso)

#### BBC Singers

Four concerts in Milton Court Concert Hall include JS Bach's



Joyce DiDonato will star in Handel's *Ariodante* with The English Concert

Mass in B minor, and a concert devised and conducted by Eric Whitacre. Other highlights include Martyn Brabbins conducting music by Jonathan Harvey at LSO St Luke's, and four early-evening 'Singers at Six' concerts.

[bbc.co.uk/singers](http://bbc.co.uk/singers)

#### BBC Symphony Orchestra

The orchestra's Barbican season includes six concerts with Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo, and Semyon Bychkov's 'Beloved Friend' Tchaikovsky cycle. Other highlights include Berlioz's *Grande messe des morts* at the Royal Albert Hall, John Adams's opera *Doctor Atomic*, and 'Total Immersion' days devoted to the music of Richard Rodney Bennett, Philip Glass and Edgard Varèse. Guest artists include Jonas Kaufmann and David Sedaris, and there is new music from Diana Burrell, Kaija Saariaho and Detlev Glanert, among others.

[bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra](http://bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra)

#### Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Under the leadership of Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits, the BSO's season includes one series placing the music of Elgar within the context of the European Romantic tradition, and another focused on great symphonies from the middle part of the 20th century. Serbian violinist Nemanja Radulović is Artist in Residence, and there will be debuts from conductors James Feddeck and Antonio Méndez, trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth and pianist Sebastian Knauer.

[bsolive.com](http://bsolive.com)

#### Britten Sinfonia

New music and exciting partnerships characterise the Barbican Associate Ensemble's season, including, in spring 2017, the launch of a new three-year Beethoven symphony cycle conducted by Thomas Adès. Earlier in the season, Adès conducts the European premiere of Gerald Barry's *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, with Barbara Hannigan in the title-role. Many of the Barbican programmes will also be presented during the Sinfonia's Saffron Hall and Norwich residencies.

[brittensinfonia.com](http://brittensinfonia.com)

#### City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

CBSO's much-anticipated first season with Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla as Music Director launches with her conducting the Overture from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4 and Hans Abrahamsen's *Let me tell you* with soprano Barbara Hannigan. Other conducting highlights from her over the season include Mahler's Symphony No 1, the UK premiere of *Fires* by her Lithuanian compatriot Raminta Šerkšnytė, Mozart's Piano Concerto No 27 in B flat, with Francesco Piemontesi, and Tippett's Piano Concerto with Artist in Residence Steven Osborne as soloist.

[cbsoco.uk](http://cbsoco.uk)

#### City of London Sinfonia

CLS embarks on the 'Great British Choral Anthems' national tour of England's cathedrals in the autumn of 2016 under the baton of Artistic Director Stephen Layton. The season also incorporates the 'Folk Tunes Tall

Tales' series, exploring the traditions and folk stories of the British Isles and beyond. Concerts include a Burns Night Ceilidh at Wilton's Music Hall, and, at Village Underground, Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* under Principal Conductor Michael Collins, featuring narration and dance.

[cityoflondonsinfonia.co.uk](http://cityoflondonsinfonia.co.uk)

#### Classical Opera

This season sees Classical Opera's exploration and contextualisation of Mozart's music, 'Mozart 250', celebrate the 250th anniversary of the 11-year-old composer's first stage works. Thomas Guthrie directs new productions of *Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebots* and *Apollo et Hyacinthus*, Mozart's influences will be explored through works by Haydn, Gluck, Abel and Mysliveček among others, while other highlights include Kristian Bezuidenhout playing Mozart's first keyboard concertos.

[classicalopera.co.uk](http://classicalopera.co.uk)

#### The English Concert

Highlights this season include a staged version of Handel's *Messiah* at the Bristol Old Vic, directed by the venue's Artistic Director Tom Morris. In April and May, the ensemble embarks on the next instalment of their Handel-in-concert series, originally commissioned by Carnegie Hall, with an international tour of *Ariodante* featuring Joyce DiDonato in the title-role.

[englishconcert.co.uk](http://englishconcert.co.uk)

#### English National Opera

It's all change at the ENO this season, which is the first to be divided into autumn and spring seasons at the Coliseum, with the summer devoted to other venues around London and beyond - in 2017, the Opera House at Blackpool's Winter Gardens, Hackney Empire, and Southbank Centre. Highlights include Rory Kinnear in his directorial debut with the world premiere of Ryan Wigglesworth's *The Winter's Tale*, and Mark Wigglesworth conducting William Kentridge's new production of Berg's *Lulu*.

[eno.org](http://eno.org)

#### English Touring Opera

The touring company's season includes performances of Handel's *Xerxes*, Monteverdi's *Ulysses' Homecoming*, Cavalli's *La Calisto*, ▶

Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, and Puccini's *Tosca*. Another highlight is Bach's *St John Passion*, for which ETO soloists will join with the Old Street Band and more than 30 cathedral, youth and gospel choirs, performing a newly commissioned translation of the work by a team of writers including John McCarthy and Rowan Williams.

[englishtouringopera.co.uk](http://englishtouringopera.co.uk)

### Hallé

'Northern Legends' is the theme this season, opened by Mark Elder conducting Tchaikovsky's *Hamlet* Fantasy-Overture and Beethoven's Symphony No 6. Later on in the season, Elder's 70th birthday will be marked by a trio of Elgar concerts. Another highlight will be Jonathon Heyward making his debut as Assistant Conductor with Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides* Overture. The season concludes with a collaboration with the BBC Philharmonic, for Schoenberg's epic cantata, *Gurrelieder*.

[halle.co.uk](http://halle.co.uk)

### Kings Place

The season kicks off in September with the annual Kings Place Festival weekend, which this year includes performances from the Brodsky and Chilingirian quartets. The 'Baroque Unwrapped' series continues, with visiting artists including violinist Rachel Podger and The Sixteen. There is also the second year of the Aurora Orchestra's 'Mozart's Piano' series, which includes Cedric Tiberghien performing Mozart's Fifth and Sixth Piano Concertos, and with main concerts complemented by the late-night series, 'The Lock-In'.

[kingsplace.co.uk](http://kingsplace.co.uk)

### London Philharmonic Orchestra

Nearly all the LPO's 2017 concerts are devoted to Southbank Centre's year-long multi-artform festival, 'Belief and Beyond Belief', exploring how music, art, culture, science, philosophy, rituals and traditions have informed belief, religion and spirituality. Highlights of this include a rare performance of Penderecki's 1966 *St Luke Passion*. Other season highlights include Osmo Vänskä conducting a complete Sibelius symphony cycle across four consecutive concerts.

[lpo.org.uk](http://lpo.org.uk)



Vasily Petrenko celebrates his 10th year in Liverpool with a Beethoven cycle

### London Sinfonietta

Southbank residency highlights include the UK premiere of Beat Furrer's music theatre work, *FAMA*, at St John's Smith Square. Other highlights include the world premiere at LSO St Luke's, and then toured to Turner Sims Southampton, of the album *Snowmelt*, recorded with saxophonist Marius Neset as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival. The orchestra's new series at Kings Place, 'Turning Points', explores the ideas of 20th-century composers including Stockhausen and Ligeti, and their continued influence today.

[londonsinfonietta.org.uk](http://londonsinfonietta.org.uk)

### London Symphony Orchestra

The LSO's season opens with Gianandrea Noseda's first concert as Principal Guest Conductor, performing Verdi's Requiem; the first of five major choral works this season that include John Adams conducting his own *E/ Niño*. Simon Rattle's season begins with another collaboration with the director Peter Sellars, of Ligeti's *Le grand macabre*. The LSO also partners with Wigmore Hall for the first time, with Wigmore Hall recitals from LSO Artist Portrait Janine Jansens to complement her Barbican concerto performances.

[iso.co.uk](http://iso.co.uk)

### Manchester Camerata

Season highlights include a 'From Haydn to Hendrix' concert, mixing the music of 18th-century 'rock stars' Haydn and Mozart with that of modern ones such as the Rolling Stones. Other highlights include Guy Johnston and Gabriella Swallow performing the world premiere of

Colin Riley's Double Concerto for Two Cellos, Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud's *Equinox*, presented in collaboration with Manchester Science Festival, and Mozart from pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet.

[manchestercamerata.co.uk](http://manchestercamerata.co.uk)

### Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras

The Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras celebrate Monteverdi's 450th anniversary with an international tour featuring concert performances of all three of his surviving operas: *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *L'Orfeo*, with Bristol's Colston Hall hosting the UK premiere of this full trilogy. The season will also include performances of his *Vespers* and madrigals.

[monteverdi.co.uk](http://monteverdi.co.uk)

### National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain

Visiting conductors include John Wilson and Carlos Miguel Prieto; repertoire includes Szymanowski's Symphony No 4 for piano and orchestra (with Tamara Stefanovich) and Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2.

[nyo.org.uk](http://nyo.org.uk)

### Orchestra of the Swan

This Stratford-based chamber orchestra celebrates its 21st birthday. Former BBC Young Musician of the Year, cellist Laura van der Heijden, joins as Associate Artist. Highlights include a tour to Mexico, series in Stratford, Birmingham and across Worcestershire, commissions showcasing the orchestra's own

musicians, and appearances by Jennifer Pike, Roderick Williams and Julian Lloyd Webber.

[orchestraoftheswan.org](http://orchestraoftheswan.org)

### Opera North

The season opens with the return of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, conducted by Aleksandar Markovic who appears for the first time in his new role as Opera North's Music Director. Other highlights include Orpha Phelan's new production of Britten's *Billy Budd*, and three new productions of operatic fairy tales, all of which use video inventively: Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Rossini's *Cinderella*.

[operanorth.co.uk](http://operanorth.co.uk)

### Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Bach Collegium Japan's Masaaki Suzuki directs the OAE for the first time this season, in a performance of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with Anna Dennis the soprano soloist. Other highlights include a Méhul Gala Concert as part of the orchestra's exploration of Paris between 1780 and 1830, mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly starring in Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, and Steven Isserlis in Haydn's C major Cello Concerto, conducted by Adam Fischer.

[oae.co.uk](http://oae.co.uk)

### Philharmonia Orchestra

The season's opening project, 'The Virtual Orchestra', sees the Philharmonia and its Principal Conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen present the first major virtual reality production from a UK symphony orchestra, with viewers able to experience a 360-degree 3D video and audio performance via headsets in the Southbank Centre's foyer spaces. Other highlights include the culmination of the 'Stravinsky: Myths & Rituals' series, with Peter Sellars's production of *Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*.

[philharmonia.co.uk](http://philharmonia.co.uk)

### Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

Vasily Petrenko launches his 10th year as Chief Conductor with a complete Beethoven symphony cycle in four concerts over 10 days. Artist in Residence is violinist James Ehnes. 'Revolution' is a season theme, featuring ground-breaking works

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and a femme fatale.

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## What's on in Autumn 2016

Mozart

**Don Giovanni**

30 September–26 October

Puccini

**Tosca**

3 October–3 December

Bizet

**The Pearl Fishers**

19 October–2 December

Berg

**Lulu**

9–19 November

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**Marvellous Miller**

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English National Opera



by JS Bach, Berlioz, Stravinsky and The Beatles. The 50th anniversary of the latter's *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is being marked with a symphonic recreation of the entire album.

[liverpoolphil.com](http://liverpoolphil.com)

### Royal Northern Sinfonia and Sage Gateshead

At the heart of the new season is RNS's 16-concert 'At Home' series, which includes performances of all five of Beethoven's piano concertos with the RNS's Music Director Lars Vogt as soloist, and Beethoven's Triple Concerto for which Vogt is joined by Christian and Tanja Tetzlaff. All six concertos form part of a live recording project with the Ondine label, co-produced by Deutschland Funk. Other highlights of Sage Gateshead's classical season include dates from five visiting orchestras, one of which is the SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, conducted by Christoph Eschenbach.

[sagegateshead.com](http://sagegateshead.com);  
[northern-sinfonia.com](http://northern-sinfonia.com); [classicalseason.com](http://classicalseason.com)

### Royal Opera House

Having renewed his contract until 2020, Music Director Antonio Pappano conducts three of the new productions: *Norma*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Otello*. Contemporary highlights include the UK premiere of Thomas Adès's new opera, *The Exterminating Angel*, and the first revival of George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*. A Baroque highlight comes in the form of Jette Parker Young Artists performing a modern setting of Handel's *Oreste* at Wilton's Music Hall.

[roh.org.uk](http://roh.org.uk)

### Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra celebrates its 70th anniversary this season with two brand new London series and a gala concert featuring the RPO's Artist Director and Principal Conductor, Charles Dutoit, violinist and Principal Guest Conductor, Pinchas Zukerman, and pianist Martha Argerich. Other highlights include Marin Alsop conducting Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with soloist Renaud Capuçon, and Tadaaki Otaka conducting Walton's Symphony No.1.

[rpo.co.uk](http://rpo.co.uk)



Martha Argerich will play with the Royal Philharmonic in its 70th anniversary season

### Royal Scottish National Orchestra

The second of the RSNO's two-season celebration of its 125th anniversary also marks Peter Oundjian's fifth year as Music Director, and Thomas Søndergård's fifth as Principal Guest Conductor. Large-scale symphonic works, the orchestra's speciality, feature heavily, with a focus on Rachmaninov, Mahler and Sibelius. Artists in Residence are Giovanni Sollima, Jonathan Biss and Nikolai Lugansky; the latter marks the 125th anniversary of Prokofiev's birth by concluding his survey of Prokofiev's piano concertos.

[rsno.org.uk](http://rsno.org.uk)

### Saffron Hall

Saffron Hall has tripled its attendance in just two seasons, and the 2016-17 season very much reflects its health. Britten Sinfonia begins its long-term residency with a concert alongside The Sixteen and Harry Christophers; it is part of their world premiere tour of James MacMillan's *Stabat Mater*. Other notable debuts include the Bergen Philharmonic with Edward Gardner, and recitals from Anne-Sofie von Otter with string quartet Brooklyn Rider, and Stephen Hough. There will also be three fully-staged operas from English Touring Opera.

[saffronhall.com](http://saffronhall.com)

### St John's Smith Square

Over 300 concerts feature more than 30 world premieres – including that of Julian Philips's *Winter Music*, premiered by the SJSS Young Artist, harpist Oliver Wass. Baroque highlights include SJSS debuts from Les Talens Lyriques and La

Serenissima, and the return of groups such as Gabrieli, who perform Handel's *Dixit Dominus*. Other events include a new Holy Week Festival curated by Tenebrae. Southbank Centre's residency also continues.

[sjss.org.uk](http://sjss.org.uk)

### Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Mozart is the musical heartland of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and his music features strongly this season with Principal Conductor Robin Ticciati. New music highlights include several major new commissions from Martin Suckling, James MacMillan and Lyell Cresswell, whilst guest artists include Nicola Benedetti, Maria João Pires, and Harry Christophers and The Sixteen.

[sco.org.uk](http://sco.org.uk)

### Scottish Opera

The first season to be announced since Stuart Stratford formally took up the post of Music Director features new productions of *Pelléas and Mélisande*, *La bohème*, *The Elixir of Love* and *Bluebeard's Castle*, the latter being partnered with the world premiere of a specially devised companion piece for it, *The 8th Door*, created by Vanishing Point's Matthew Lenton and Scottish Opera's Composer in Residence Liam Paterson. Other highlights will be the Scottish premieres of Philip Glass's *The Trial* and Puccini's *Le Villi*.

[scottishopera.org.uk](http://scottishopera.org.uk)

### The Sixteen

The ensemble will be joining forces with Britten Sinfonia and the Barbican for the world premiere of a major new James MacMillan

work, commissioned by the Genesis Foundation, which will then be toured (with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for Edinburgh and Glasgow). Other highlights include continuing residencies at Wigmore Hall, King's Place, London, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, a Choral Pilgrimage touring music by Palestrina and Poulenc to over 30 UK venues, plus a further UK tour featuring Bach's *Magnificat*.

[thesixteen.com](http://thesixteen.com)

### Ulster Orchestra

The orchestra's 50th season sees Chief Conductor Rafael Payare continue his exploration of Beethoven's music with the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. He also conducts a concert performance of Puccini's *La bohème*, in partnership with Northern Ireland Opera. Principal Guest Conductor Jac van Steen presides over concerts including Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, and former Principal Conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier returns to conduct his own orchestral arrangement of Ravel's *Piano Trio in A minor*. Visiting artists include Barry Douglas, performing all three of Tchaikovsky's piano concertos.

[ulsterorchestra.org.uk](http://ulsterorchestra.org.uk)

### Welsh National Opera

'Shakespeare 400', 'Love's Poisoned Chalice' and 'Vienna Vice' are themes in a season that sees Tomáš Hanus make his debut as the company's new Music Director. He conducts *Die Fledermaus* and Olivia Fuchs's new production of *Der Rosenkavalier*, with Rebecca Evans making her role debut as the Marschallin. Other highlights include the British premiere of André Tchaikovsky's *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Keith Warner.

[wno.org.uk](http://wno.org.uk)

### Wigmore Hall

Mezzo Sarah Connolly and pianist Malcolm Martineau open the season. Helen Grime becomes Wigmore Hall's first female Composer in Residence, and there will be major artist residencies and series from trumpeter Alison Balsom, pianists Igor Levit and Francesco Piemontesi, and violinist Janine Jansen and the Takács Quartet, among others. The number of £5 tickets offered to under 35s doubles, and a new partnership begins with medici.tv.

[wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk)

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Laurence Equilbey and the Insula Orchestra will be taking up an important residence in Paris in April 2017

### Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome

The season opens at the Auditorium, Parco della Musica with Beethoven's *Fidelio*, its cast includes Rachel Willis-Sørensen, Günther Groissböck and Amanda Forsythe. Among other highlights will be a gala concert with Cecilia Bartoli in January conducted by Music Director Antonio Pappano, and Bach's *St John Passion* featuring soloists Lucy Crowe and Ann Hallenberg. In autumn and spring the orchestra tours Europe, including a concert on May 11 at London's Royal Festival Hall.

[santacecilia.it/en](http://santacecilia.it/en)

### Bavarian RSO

Highlights from Chief Conductor Mariss Jansons include Mozart's Requiem alongside Thomas Larcher's *A Padmore Cycle*, both featuring Artist in Residence Mark Padmore, for whom the latter was written. The season's other Artist in Residence is Rudolf Buchbinder, and there are conducting debuts from Ryan Wigglesworth, Cristian Măcelaru and Lahav Shani. Outside Munich the orchestra opens Musikfest Berlin with Rihm's *Tutuguri*, conducted by Daniel Harding.

[br-so.com](http://br-so.com)

### Bavarian State Opera

'What Follows' is the theme for this season, which features eight new productions. Kirill Petrenko conducts two of these: first, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* from Harry Kupfer, and then Wagner's *Tannhäuser* - which he conducts for the first time - from Romeo Castellucci. Other new production highlights are Omer Meir Wellber conducting Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* (directed by Philipp Stölzl) with Anja Harteros and Jonas Kaufmann, and Weber's *Oberon*, *King of the Elves* (Nikolaus Habjan directing) with Julian Prégardien, Brenden Gunnell and Annette Dasch, conducted by Ivor Bolton.

[staatsoper.de/en](http://staatsoper.de/en)

### Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra

Edward Gardner opens his first complete season as Chief Conductor with *Tjat*, written by Bergen's own Knut Vaage, Elgar's Cello Concerto with soloist Truls Mørk, and Mahler's Symphony No 5. Mørk and violinist Baiba Skride are among the soloists who join the orchestra for its British tour in January, which visits Saffron Hall, Birmingham, Basingstoke, Sheffield and Nottingham. Another highlight, in May, will be Peter Grimes,

presented with the Bergen National Opera and featuring Stuart Skelton in the title-role.

[harmonien.no](http://harmonien.no)

### Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

This season explores the voice with works including Puccini's *Tosca*, and Peter Sellars's production of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*. Chief Conductor Simon Rattle conducts 53 concerts and 10 opera performances, including *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* by Composer in Residence John Adams. Adams also makes his conducting debut with the orchestra this season, as does Andrés Orozco-Estrada. World premieres include works by Thomas Adès, Andrew Norman, Wolfgang Rihm and Simon Holt.

[berliner-philharmoniker.de](http://berliner-philharmoniker.de)

### Czech Philharmonic

Notable concerts headed by Chief Conductor Jiří Bělohlávek include pianist Behzod Abduraimov performing Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* in a programme that also features Shostakovich's Symphony No 1, and Nicolaj Znaider in Mozart's Violin Concerto No 5. Other highlights include David Zinman conducting

Elgar's Cello Concerto with Sol Gabetta. Advent gets special treatment this year too, with two concerts played every Sunday during the pre-Christmas period.

[ceskafilharmonie.cz](http://ceskafilharmonie.cz)

### Deutsche Oper Berlin

The six new productions this season include Swiss composer Andrea Lorenzo Scartazzini's new opera, *Edward II*, based on Christopher Marlowe's tragedy about the allegedly homosexual English king, conducted by Thomas Søndergård. Meanwhile, *Ambushed from Behind* is the name of a brand new series of unusual musical theatre in the Tischlerei, which opens with the world premiere of Brandt Brauer Frick's new musical theatre piece, *Gianni*, about Gianni Versace.

[deutschoperberlin.de](http://deutschoperberlin.de)

### Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Bremen

Something of a secret to UK audiences, this ensemble is a hot ticket on the European circuit with critically acclaimed performances at the Rheingau, Schleswig Holstein and Salzburg Festivals. With Artistic Director Paavo Järvi, it has recorded the complete symphonies of Beethoven and Schumann for Sony Classical and releases the first CD in its Brahms cycle in Spring 2017.

[kammerphilharmonie.com](http://kammerphilharmonie.com)

### Fondation Louis Vuitton

The Fondation Louis Vuitton is an extraordinary modern art gallery by Frank Gehry on the edge of Paris's Jardin d'Acclimatation, with a beautiful 350-seater Yasuhisa Toyota-designed concert hall at its centre. Recital highlights include pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, and two Arvo Pärt concerts from violinists Gidon Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko with pianist Reinut Tepp. The venue is also home to cellist Gautier Capuçon's cello class, in which he mentors six cellists over the course of the season.

[fondationlouisvuitton.fr](http://fondationlouisvuitton.fr)

### Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig

Herbert Blomstedt conducts an all-Beethoven season opener featuring the *Leonore* Overture No 2, Symphony No 7, and the *Emperor* Concerto with soloist András Schiff.

A Mendelssohn festival opens under John Eliot Gardiner, joined by the Monteverdi Choir, while 'A Universe of Music' explores English music from Britten to Ferneyhough. Another highlight will be Andris Nelsons conducting Michael Gandolfini's *Ascending Light* for organ and orchestra - one of three German premieres this season.

**gewandhausorchester.de**

### Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra

Two essential concerts this season are the ones conducted by the orchestra's Chief Conductor designate, 30-year-old Finn Santtu-Matias Rouvali. In September, he leads Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1 featuring Marc-André Hamelin, and Prokofiev's *Sinfonia Concertante* with Artist in Residence Truls Mørk in May. Alain Altinoglu opens the season with a Nordic programme, featuring Larsson Gothe's *The Apotheosis of Dance*, and Sibelius's Violin Concerto with soloist Baiba Skride.

**gso.se**

### Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Yan Pascal Tortelier opens his first season as Chief Conductor leading the orchestra in Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 with Nikolai Lugansky, along with excerpts from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*. Later in the season Tortelier conducts *From Darkness Woven* by Icelandic composer Haukur Tómasson [en.harpa.is](http://en.harpa.is)

### Insula Orchestra

This season, the Insula Orchestra, led by Laurence Equilbey, becomes the exclusive classical music Ensemble in Residence of a new arts centre in Paris, Cité musicale de L'Île Seguin, opening in April 2017.

**insulaorchestra.fr**

### Les Talens Lyriques

The French ensemble premieres two new opera productions directed by Mariame Clement this season: Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* in Vienna, and Cavalli's *La Calisto* in Strasbourg. Other highlights include Monteverdi's madrigals with Dutch National Opera and soloists from the company's opera studio; this performance is

repeated at the Brighton Festival in May. In June, founder and director Christophe Rousset makes his conducting debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with Mozart's *Mitridate*.

**lestalenslyriques.com**

### Luxembourg Philharmonic

In his second year with the OPL, Chief Conductor Gustavo Gimeno presents a clutch of firsts: a series of rush-hour concerts, a new festival, 'Atlântico', of Lusophone music, and Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* as his first opera with the orchestra. Other projects include a tour to Spain, and a series of recordings with Dutch label Pentatone. The four artists in residence this season are conductor Valery Gergiev, violinist Janine Jansen, and pianists Stefano Bollani and Jean-François Zygel.

**philharmonie.lu**

### Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg

The Mariinsky Theatre's season opens with Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* conducted by Artistic Director Valery Gergiev, Weinberg's *The Idiot* conducted by Thomas

Sanderling, and an evening of ballets by Mikel Fochine. Later in September the orchestra tours to the UK, Gergiev conducting a full Prokofiev symphony cycle at London's Cadogan Hall, alongside both of Prokofiev's violin concertos, featuring Kristóf Baráti as soloist.

**mariinsky.ru**

### Munich Philharmonic

Opening the season, Music Director Valery Gergiev conducts Act V of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, along with Strauss's *Don Juan* and *Ein Heldenleben*. The Bruckner focus continues with Symphonies Nos 6 and 9, while in November the 'MPHIL 360°' festival sees Gergiev celebrate the 125th anniversary of Prokofiev's birth by conducting all the composer's symphonies, both with the Munich Philharmonic and the Mariinsky Orchestra.

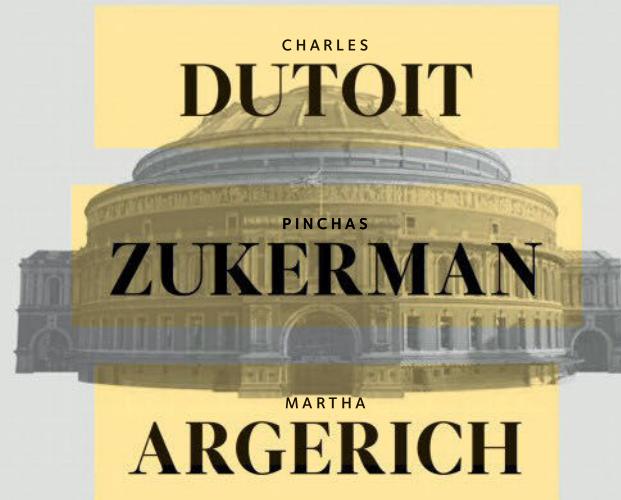
**mphil.de**

### Oslo Philharmonic

This season's highlights include Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko leading a concert featuring Dvořák's Cello Concerto played by Truls Mørk.



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and Prokofiev's Symphony No 5, for which the orchestra doubles its numbers, joined by the musicians of its Young Philharmonic. Other highlights include Marek Janowski conducting a Wagner programme featuring soprano Petra Lang, with the Oslo Philharmonic Choir joining them for Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, conducted by Jukka-Pekka Saraste.

**ofono**

### Müpa, Budapest

Visiting artists at the multi-arts venue in Budapest this season include Cecilia Bartoli performing 'Handel's Heroines', Péter Eötvös conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Antonio Pappano conducting the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and sitar player Anoushka Shankar. Another highlight will be a concert performance of Jean-Philippe Rameau's rarely performed opera *Nais*, by Hungary's Purcell Choir and Orfeo Orchestra as part of The Early Music Festival.

**mupa.hu/en**

### Paris National Opera

New productions include Cavalli's *Eliogabalo* by Thomas Jolly, Saint-Säens's *Samson et Dalila* from Damiano Michieletto, Britten's *Owen Wingrave* by Tom Creed, a double bill of Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* and Hindemith's *Sancta Susanna* from Mario Martone and Daniela Schiavone, and Wagner's *Lohengrin* by Claus Guth. There's also *Tosca*, conducted by Dan Ettinger and with an all-star cast of Anja Harteros and Liudmyla Monastyrskaya sharing the title-role, Marcelo Álvarez as Cavaradossi, and Bryn Terfel as Scarpia.

**operadeparis.fr**

### Orchestre National de Paris

New Chief Conductor Daniel Harding opens the season in the Philharmonie's Grande Salle with two performances of Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*, followed a few days later by Mahler's Symphony No 10. In November he conducts Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Joshua Bell. Other highlights include the world premiere of Philippe Hersant's *La lumière et l'ombre*, and Jukka-Pekka Saraste conducting Chopin's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Jan Lisiecki.

**orchestredeparis.com**

### Pierre Boulez Saal

An extraordinary new concert space opening in Berlin on March 4, 2017, the Pierre Boulez Saal will act as the public face of the Barenboim-Said Akademie, and was designed by architect Frank Gehry and acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota. Its own Boulez Ensemble will share the stage with musicians from other international ensembles to perform the best of traditional chamber music from the 19th and 20th centuries to today with compositions from the Middle East.

**boulezsaal.de**

### Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

'Across Borders' is the central theme this season; highlights include Cecilia Bartoli celebrating 20 years of concerts with two special events, and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra making its Amsterdam debut. Soloists performing in the Great Hall include violinists Janine Jansen and Anne-Sophie Mutter, while the new 'Master Pianists in the Small Hall' series welcomes Hannes Minnaar, Igor Levit and Jonathan Biss.

**concertgebouw.nl**

### Royal Opera House, Muscat

Stepping into the Middle East, and Muscat offers 'Excellence in Diversity', the theme for a multi-arts organisation offering the best Omani, Arab and international productions. Highlights include the house's first new opera productions, as well a performance by Iraqi-American musician Amir ElSaffar, who plays the trumpet, Arab instruments and sings both jazz and traditional Iraqi *magam*; he appears with the great Iraqi-Hungarian *oud* virtuoso, Omar Bashir. Classical soloists include Plácido Domingo, who both sings in a gala concert and conducts the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra to celebrate ROH Muscat's fifth anniversary.

**rohmuscat.org.om**

### Royal Stockholm Philharmonic

Highlights include Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo directing the world premiere of Anders Hillborg's Violin Concerto No 2 with Lisa Batiashvili as soloist. This year's International Composer Festival celebrates Oliver Knussen, and pianist Yuja Wang will be Artist in Residence. Her concerts include Bartók's Piano Concerto No 3

alongside Oramo and the orchestra, and a special solo piano recital.

**konserthuset.se**

### RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra

Things to look out for this season include two mini-series, one of which is 'Bruckner: Music and Faith', featuring Bruckner's Fifth, Sixth and Seventh symphonies together with his *Te Deum*. A strong Russian thread includes all four of Tchaikovsky's piano concertos performed over two days by Barry Douglas. Highlights with the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir include the world premiere of *Humiliated and Insulted* by RTÉ Composer in Residence Gerald Barry, co-commissioned by RTÉ and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

**rte.ie**

### St Petersburg Philharmonia

Principal Conductor Yuri Temirkanov opens the season with Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, and Sibelius's Violin Concerto, with Sergey Khachaturyan as soloist. This year's International Winter Festival, 'Arts Square', opens with violinist Julia Fischer conducted by Temirkanov, and closes with pianist Denis Matsuev. Other visiting artists this season include violinist Joshua Bell.

**philharmonia.spb.ru**

### Staatskapelle, Dresden

The links between our classical roots and the music of the modern age is a prominent theme this year, including a concert programming music by JS Bach and Johann Gottlieb Naumann with the music of Sofia Gubaidulina, who begins her second season as Composer in Residence. Principal Conductor Christian Thielemann continues his Bruckner cycle, and he'll also conduct Artist in Residence Daniil Trifonov in piano concertos by Mozart and Ravel.

**staatskapelle-dresden.de**

### Semperoper Dresden

It's a packed opera season in Dresden, one sure highlight of which will be Christian Thielemann conducting a new co-production of Verdi's *Otello*, staged by Vincent Boussard with costumes by Christian Lacroix, and with Johan Botha as Otello and Dorothea Röschmann as Desdemona. There's also a Mozart cycle, presented as part of the

'Mozart Days' festival, featuring artists including Christopher Moulds and Danielle de Niese.

**semperoper.de**

### Suisse Romande Orchestra

In Jonathan Nott's inaugural season as the orchestra's Music and Artistic Director, he brings his expertise in the German and Austrian repertoire to the OSR, both in Switzerland and on a tour of Spain. Contemporary music also features strongly, including three Swiss premieres of music by John Adams, Lera Auerbach and Michael Jarrell, and the world premiere of a work by Jean-Luc Darbelley.

**osr.ch**

### Teatro alla Scala, Milan

Riccardo Chailly conducts two new productions for La Scala, opening the season with Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* this December, directed by Alvis Hermanis, then later Rossini's *La gazza ladra*, directed by Gabriele Salvatores. Other highlights include Paavo Järvi conducting Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Thomas Hampson in the title-role, and Nello Santi conducting Verdi's *La traviata*, with Ailyn Pérez and Anna Netrebko sharing the role of Violetta.

**teatrallasscala.org**

### Teatro Real, Madrid

A new production of Verdi's *Otello* from David Alden opens the season; a co-production with English National Opera and the Royal Swedish Opera, with Gregory Kunde and then Alfred Kim in the title-role. Other new productions include Britten's *Billy Budd* from Deborah Warner, and the world premiere of *La ciudad de las mentiras*, a new musical theatre piece in 15 acts by Elena Mendoza.

**teatro-real.com**

### Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Emmanuelle Haïm conducts the orchestra for the first time this season, both in Lucerne and Vienna. Other highlights include Gustavo Dudamel conducting the New Year's Concert for the first time, and the Summer Night Concert Schönbrunn in Vienna under Christoph Eschenbach, starring Renée Fleming. Rudolf Buchbinder celebrates his 70th birthday; he performs, under Tugan Sokhiev, Beethoven's *Emperor* Piano Concerto on the day itself.

**wienerphilharmoniker.at**

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Yu Kosuge

Piers Lane

Olli Mustonen

Garrick Ohlsson

Martin Roscoe

Andrew Tyson

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Escher String Quartet

Kelemen String Quartet

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Olli Mustonen  
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## NORTH AMERICA



Andris Nelsons will lead the Boston Symphony Orchestra for 14 weeks in the coming season, and Thomas Adès becomes the orchestra's first ever Artistic Partner

### American Symphony Orchestra

The ASO begins its four-concert 'Carnegie Hall Vanguard' series with a programme titled 'Troubled Days of Peace', with Music Director Leon Botstein leading the orchestra and the Bard Festival Chorale in concert versions of two one-act operas that examine the First and Second World War period: Ernst Krenek's *Der Diktator* and Richard Strauss's *Friedenstag*. Later in the season, another highlight is Elgar's oratorio, *The Apostles*, for which the orchestra once again joins forces with the Bard Festival Chorale.

[americansymphony.org](http://americansymphony.org)

### Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

As the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra enters its second century, Music Director Marin Alsop focuses the season around Beethoven and Stravinsky. Other highlights include a semi-staged Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, world premieres of centennial commissions by Anna Clyne and Steve Mackey, a re-imagined *Nutcracker* with Step Afrika! Dance, *Carmina Burana*, Mahler's Sixth

Symphony, and season two of the 'Pulse' series, where the orchestra collaborates with indie bands.

[bsomusic.org](http://bsomusic.org)

### Boston Symphony Orchestra

Music Director Andris Nelsons has 14 weeks at the helm of the orchestra this season, his most extensive time commitment to the BSO since he joined in 2014. He conducts both the beginning and end-of-season concerts, the first featuring Lang Lang in Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 3, and the last starring Leif Ove Andsnes in Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 4 in a programme that also includes Mahler's Symphony No 4, with soprano Kristine Opolais. Composer-pianist Thomas Adès joins this season as the first-ever BSO Artistic Partner.

[bso.org](http://bso.org)

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra

A complete Brahms symphony cycle, a Beethoven piano concerto cycle, a celebration of Prokofiev's 125th birthday, four world premiere works and a new three-concert series

at Wheaton College are among the highlights of the Chicago SO's season, which sees Music Director Riccardo Muti conduct 10 weeks of subscription concerts over five residences, as well as leading the orchestra on a European tour.

[cso.org](http://cso.org)

### Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's 2016-17 season has been tailor-made for performances at its 'home away from home' at the Taft Theatre in Downtown Cincinnati while the orchestra's Music Hall undergoes its long-awaited renovation. Among the guest artists welcomed by the orchestra and Music Director Louis Langréé are cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Itzhak Perlman. The three-year groundbreaking 'Pelléas Trilogy' collaboration continues in its second instalment with director James Darrah. Other season highlights include the continuation of the innovative 'MusicNOW Festival', and an all-Baroque programme.

[cincinnatisymphony.org](http://cincinnatisymphony.org)

### Cleveland Orchestra

The orchestra's 99th season, and 15th under Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, looks towards its centenary year by juxtaposing old and new masterpieces with 20th- and 21st-century masterworks. Among the many works conducted by Welser-Möst are Bach's *St John Passion*. Debut artists this season include Harry Bicket, conducting a programme of Handel, Rameau and Purcell. Pianists Daniil Trifonov and Mitsuko Uchida are among the returning guest artists.

[clevelandorchestra.com](http://clevelandorchestra.com)

### Dallas Symphony

Jaap van Zweden's ninth and penultimate season as Music Director sees him conduct among other works the first-ever DSO performances of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, and the world premiere of Christopher Rouse's DSO-commissioned Symphony No 5, plus three major Prokofiev works to mark the Russian composer's 125th anniversary. The 2016-17 season also sees the debut of a

new multimedia series, 'Beyond the Score'. Baritone Matthias Goerne is Artist in Residence.

[mydso.com](http://mydso.com)

#### **Detroit Symphony Orchestra**

Highlights of Music Director Leonard Slatkin's ninth season (having also extended his contract for 2017-18) include a Gershwin theme exploring the composer's music and its impact. The season also sees the return of '#MozartFest', the fourth annual DSO Winter Music Festival. There will be three world premieres, including a piece by Terence Blanchard (Fred A & Barbara M Erb Jazz Creative Director Chair) commemorating the 50th anniversary of Detroit's year of revolution and civil unrest, in 1967.

[dso.org](http://dso.org)

#### **Los Angeles Opera**

Los Angeles Opera's season opens with Verdi's *Macbeth*, starring General Director Plácido Domingo and conducted by Music Director James Conlon, in a new production by Tony Award-winner Darko Tresnjak. Other highlights include the company premiere of Glass's *Akhnaten* (co-production with English National Opera), and star turns by Diana Damrau as the *Tales of Hoffmann* heroines, Patricia Racette as Salomé and Sondra Radvanovsky as Tosca.

[laopera.org](http://laopera.org)

#### **Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Concerts to look out for this year include Music and Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel conducting Schubert's complete symphonies in programmes alongside Mahler's orchestral songs, performed by Michelle DeYoung, Elina Garanča and Matthias Goerne. Then there's 'Adams @ 70', in which the orchestra's Creative Chair, John Adams, celebrates his birthday with performances of his landmark works including *El Niño*, *Nixon in China* and *Absolute Jest*. Other highlights include 14 world premieres, and Yuja Wang performing Bartók's three piano concertos with Dudamel in chronological order.

[laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

#### **Lyric Opera of Chicago**

The 2016-17 season marks the start of a new *Ring* cycle; other highlights are Chicago's first staged

performances of *Les Troyens*, in a new production (one of three French operas in the season) and a new *Magic Flute*. Lyric Opera's Music Director Andrew Davis will lead performances of *Das Rheingold*, *Les Troyens* and *Don Quixote*.

[lyricopera.org](http://lyricopera.org)

#### **Metropolitan Opera, New York**

The company's 50th anniversary season opens with a new staging of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Simon Rattle, directed by Mariusz Treliński and starring Nina Stemme and Stuart Skelton. Other new productions this season include *Guillaume Tell*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Rusalka* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, while Kaija Saariaho's 2000 opera *L'Amour de Loin* receives its Met Opera premiere. In May, the company's stars will present a special anniversary gala performance.

[metopera.org](http://metopera.org)

#### **Minnesota Orchestra**

Music Director Osmo Vänskä opens the season conducting Todd Levin's *Blur*, a virtuoso orchestral piece featuring synthesizer and an immense percussion section, before Joshua Bell joins them for Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, followed by Brahms's Second Symphony. Other season highlights include the orchestra's Conductor Laureate, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, conducting two performances of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony. The season closes with Vänskä conducting Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony and Haydn's D major Piano Concerto with soloist Marc-André Hamelin.

[minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org)

#### **National Symphony Orchestra**

In his final year as NSO Music Director Christoph Eschenbach leads seven weeks of programming including the season opening concert featuring pianist Lang Lang as soloist, while two programmes will be led by Music Director Designate, Gianandrea Noseda. Highlights include the premieres of NSO co-commissions from three American composers: Mason Bates, Christopher Rouse and Wynton Marsalis; also 'Slava at 90': a celebration of the NSO's former Music Director, Mstislav Rostropovich.

[kennedy-center.org/nsso](http://kennedy-center.org/nsso)

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## 2016 | 17 SEASON

### **Das Rheingold**

Wagner  
Oct 1 – 22

### **Lucia di Lammermoor**

Donizetti  
Oct 15 – Nov 6

### **Les Troyens (The Trojans)**

Berlioz  
Nov 13 – Dec 3

### **Don Quichotte (Don Quixote)**

Massenet  
Nov 19 – Dec 7

### **The Magic Flute (Die Zauberflöte)**

Mozart  
Dec 10 – Jan 27

### **Norma**

Bellini  
Jan 28 – Feb 24

### **Carmen**

Bizet  
Feb 11 – Mar 25

### **Eugene Onegin**

Tchaikovsky  
Feb 26 – Mar 20

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Longer! Louder! Wagner!  
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Mar 9

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Mar 24 & 26

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The Metropolitan Opera's season will open with a new production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle

#### New York Philharmonic

The orchestra celebrates its 175th anniversary this season by highlighting its New York City connections. The Opening Gala Concert, conducted by Music Director Alan Gilbert in his final season, reflects this with John Corigliano's *Stomp* for orchestra, Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, and Gershwin's *Piano Concerto* in F, with soloist Aaron Diehl. Pieces inspired by the city have also been commissioned from New York-based composers, including Wynton Marsalis whose new work will be premiered this season.

[nphil.org](http://nphil.org)

#### The Philadelphia Orchestra

Highlights of Yannick Nézet-Séguin's fifth season as Music Director include a three-week Paris Festival with all performances conducted by him, a Rachmaninov festival led by Principal Guest Conductor Stéphane Denève, featuring all four piano concertos, Britten's *War Requiem* with Conductor Laureate Charles Dutoit, and a focus on American music including works by Mason

Bates, Ruth Crawford Seeger and Christopher Theofanidis, plus two world premieres including a new concerto from Christopher Rouse.

[philorch.org](http://philorch.org)

#### Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Manfred Honeck's 2016-2017 season offers a survey of the music of James MacMillan, along with several 'Symphonic Passports': programmes reflecting on a city or geographic region. Pinchas Zukerman opens the season, and other soloists include Hélène Grimaud, Midori, Frank Peter Zimmermann, and, in a celebration for his 70th birthday, Rudolf Buchbinder.

[pittsburghsymphony.org](http://pittsburghsymphony.org)

#### St Louis Symphony Orchestra

The opening weekend of David Robertson's 12th season as Music Director features Kurt Weill's canata, *The Flight of Lindbergh*, to celebrate the anniversary of Charles Lindbergh's historic transatlantic flight. The 70th birthday of composer John Adams is also celebrated this

season, featuring works including his Violin Concerto with soloist Leila Josefowicz, and a Carnegie Hall performance of his oratorio, *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. The season finale will be Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*.

[stlsymphony.org](http://stlsymphony.org)

#### San Francisco Opera

The San Francisco Opera season features the world premiere of Bright Sheng's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, featuring an all-star production team headed by acclaimed Taiwanese director Stan Lai and Academy Award-winning designer Tim Yip. Other highlights include new productions of *Andréa Chenier*, *Don Pasquale* and *Aida*, and five revivals including Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* with Nadja Michael as Emilia Marty.

[sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com)

#### San Francisco Symphony

Highlights this season include a semi-staged performance of Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* with new staging conceived by Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas,

directed by James Darrah, with video design by Adam Larsen, and featuring soprano Joélle Harvey. Amongst the SFS commissions and premieres is the world premiere of Bright Sheng's 'Overture' to *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The birthdays of John Adams (70) and Steve Reich (80) - as well as the Lou Harrison centennial - are also marked.

[sfsymphony.org](http://sfsymphony.org)

#### Seattle Symphony

The artful pairing of traditional repertoire with bold new works is top of the agenda for Ludovic Morlot's sixth season as Music Director. Highlights include the second part of a two-year Beethoven cycle, and Morlot's first opera in Benaroya Hall, Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, with stage design by Anne Patterson. Innovative concert presentation continues, including the Sonic Evolution programme, and a late-night concert series which explore the works of modern Polish, Russian and American composers. New recordings include a volume of Berlioz cantatas.

[seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)

#### TōN, The Orchestra Now

Only one year old, TōN is Leon Botstein's degree programme and pre-professional orchestra. Its second season sees series at Carnegie Hall, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Fisher Center at Bard College, plus free concerts throughout New York City and beyond. Guest conductors this season include Fabio Luisi, Oleg Caetani, Jindong Cai, Harold Farberman, Federico Cortese and JoAnn Falletta.

[theorchestranoow.org](http://theorchestranoow.org)

#### Washington National Opera

Led by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, one highlight is a weekend festival featuring four new American works to celebrate the fifth season of the company's American Opera Initiative. This includes the world premiere of *The Dictator's Wife*, a new hour-long opera by American composer Mohammed Fairouz and librettist Mohammed Hanif. There will also be two new American operas in the spring. Other highlights include James Gaffigan making his WNO debut conducting Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

[kennedy-center.org/wno](http://kennedy-center.org/wno)

# GRAMOPHONE

## RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Andrew Farach-Colton welcomes Tetzlaff and Vogt's return to the three Brahms violin sonatas – more spontaneous even than their 2002 live recording



### Brahms

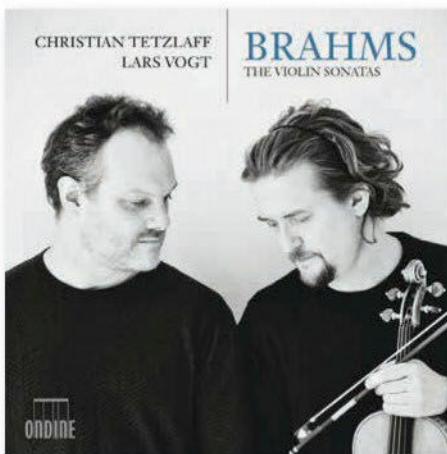
Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 78; No 2, Op 100;  
No 3, Op 108. 'FAE' Sonata – Scherzo, WoO2

**Christian Tetzlaff vn Lars Vogt pf**  
Ondine © ODE1284-2D (73' • DDD)

Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt first recorded the three Brahms violin sonatas for EMI at the 2002 'Spannungen' chamber music festival in Heimbach, Germany – spirited, occasionally restless performances that thrillingly capture the adrenalin rush of a live concert. This new studio account from Ondine preserves much of the 'incisiveness, urgency and lightness of touch' that Edward Greenfield justly praised in his review of that EMI disc, along with a breathtaking balance of poise and daring.

As in their live recording, Tetzlaff and Vogt favour flowing tempi, yet there's an even greater sense of spontaneity and elasticity here than before – as the opening movement of Op 78 illustrates so beautifully. Although it's marked *Vivace ma non troppo*, the players start out serenely; indeed, there's little if any sense of *vivace* at all. Rather, one becomes aware of a growing ebullience. It's signalled subtly at the beginning, as liquid streams of quavers gather into a gentle cascade, and reaches fruition only in the coda, which surges exultantly. In between, though, there's an ebb and flow, a multiplicity of swirling currents that are somehow contained as an uninterrupted, unified body. Listen at around 2'58", where the instruments trade searching, syncopated melody and breathless accompaniment. Tetzlaff and Vogt imbue this intertwining dance with tender intimacy, and the resulting feeling of anticipation is exquisite.

In numerous passages throughout the programme, in fact, the players find ways to hold



*Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt take obvious pleasure in details without losing sight of the larger picture*

even the most expansive melodies or phrases taut (but not rigidly so) and thereby create enormous tension. There's a section near the end of the *Adagio* of Op 78 (at 5'17") where – after some intricate figuration – the texture suddenly becomes drastically simplified to something like a distantly remembered, decelerated march. Vogt doesn't stiffen

up here and grip the dotted rhythms, as György Sebők does, say, in his classic Philips recording with Arthur Grumiaux, but instead seems to feel his way forwards, step by step. Sebők's approach dissipates the emotional pressure, Vogt's heightens it. And when, over this slow-moving procession, Tetzlaff entreats with a warm, beacon-like song, the effect is mesmeric.

Vogt can be almost reticent at times. His soft playing is very soft, although its presence is felt even at its quietest, perhaps because his touch is so varied and articulate. In the finale of Op 78, note how he distinguishes between the delicate pitter-patter of the right hand's semiquavers and the left's pizzicato-like interjections. Tetzlaff, for his part, employs a similarly diverse tonal arsenal. That glorious E flat major melody (at 3'50") is rendered with a silky legato, the double-stops amplifying the effect through texture, not volume, as if a single tone could not contain such emotion. And then at the movement's end – first at 6'40", with its ravishing *dolcissimo* playing, and then at 7'29", where Tetzlaff reduces his sound to a confessional whisper – every phrase is intensely, memorably expressive.

On the live EMI recording, Tetzlaff's sound was wiry and slightly edgy. Here, in Bremen's Sendesaal, Ondine's engineers do him full justice. He does not have a big, fat, voluptuous sound; it's on the lean side, yet focused, gleaming, and capable of a completely un-saccharine sweetness. Notable, too, is his eloquent use of portamento – in the *Allegro amabile* of Op 100, where he moulds the first theme so elegantly (0'34"), and then, more impressively still, in the *Adagio* of Op 108, which is so heartfelt and noble.

Tetzlaff and Vogt take obvious pleasure in details without





'A breathtaking balance of poise and daring': Tetzlaff and Vogt offer a new recording of the Brahms sonatas to sit proudly on the shelf among the very best

losing sight of the larger picture, whether it's a phrase, a movement or an entire work. Indeed, they sharply delineate the individual character of each sonata. Opp 78 and 100 are both overwhelmingly sunny and lyrical, yet there's greater vulnerability in the former and more confident ardour in the latter. Op 108, on the other hand, is anxiety-ridden and turbulent – and this interpretation aptly broods and frets, seethes and squalls. Even the eerie *molto legato* passage that introduces the first movement's development (at 2'16") harbours a deep disquiet. The finale is explosive, rhythms bristling, dynamic contrasts starkly illuminated, and with an unrelenting dramatic thrust.

Similarly, in the propulsive, Hoffmann-esque Scherzo Brahms

composed for the collaborative *FAE* Sonata (along with Schumann and Albert Dietrich), Tetzlaff and Vogt go for broke. Tetzlaff makes his violin spit and whine like a fiddler possessed, while Vogt stabs at the jagged syncopations with gusto. It's an exhilarating encore to a superbly satisfying disc. No matter that the catalogue is crammed with recordings of these sonatas; this one will sit proudly on my shelf alongside Szeryng/Rubinstein, Mullova/Anderszewski and Dumay/Pires. **G**

*Violin Sonatas – selected comparison:*

*Szeryng, Rubinstein (12/62<sup>8</sup>, 1/63<sup>8</sup>) (RCA) 88697 76099-2*  
*Grumiaux, Sebok (11/76<sup>8</sup>) (PHIL) ➤ 446 570-2PM*  
*Dumay, Pires (3/93) (DG) ➤ 435 800-2GH*  
*Mullova, Anderszewski (5/97<sup>8</sup>) (PHIL) 475 7454PX-2*  
*Tetzlaff, Vogt (5/04) (EMI) 557523-2*

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#### Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

# Orchestral



Charlotte Gardner listens to a rare outing for a Stradivarius cello:

*'It almost feels as though we're intruding on a private little love affair between Gomziakov and the instrument'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**



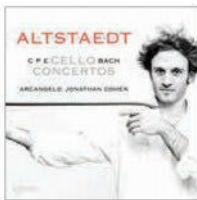
Richard Bratby on a collection of Polish violin concertos:

*'It says something when the most familiar piece on a disc is Andrzej Panufnik's Violin Concerto'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**

## CPE Bach

Cello Concertos - Wq170 H432; Wq171 H436; Wq172 H439

**Nicolas Altstaedt** vc **Arcangelo** / **Jonathan Cohen**  
Hyperion © CDA68112 (65' • DDD)



As a general rule it's a bad idea to make sweeping generalisations in

print, even if all your internal instincts are baying at you to do so. Still, it's reasonably safe to suggest that Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's music must be the most original composed during the 18th century; if you hear an orchestral work full of choppy-sounding phrases that either melodically or harmonically don't do quite what you were anticipating, then chances are it's the great JS's second surviving son, who got stuck for over 30 years as harpsichord accompanist to King Frederick the Great. The three cello concertos on this disc are in fact a reminder of his frustrating professional circumstances; written in the early 1750s, they also exist in versions for flute and harpsichord, conjuring up mental images of the composer internally grimacing as his decent-but-not-outstanding flautist employer ploughed through them.

Nicolas Altstaedt and the sinewy warmth of his 1760 *Gigli* are a great fit for this often rather wild music. Take his entrance in the A major Concerto (Wq172), bringing both a firm-toned energetic earthiness and a light, dance-like grace. Elsewhere it's his light touch that creates the tonal gold, for instance in the A minor Concerto (Wq170) slow movement's cadenza, one of a few cadenzas on the disc written by Altstaedt and Jonathan Cohen, where certain notes are no more than delicate fairy wisps. Arcangelo under Cohen also breathe the music, capturing the frequent storminess but also bringing substantial dignity, their zing coming from their actual tone and lucid textural balance; listen to the C major luminosity with which they open

that previously mentioned A minor Concerto's slow movement. All in all, a great listen. **Charlotte Gardner**

## JS Bach

Keyboard Concertos - BWV1052; BWV1053.

Violin Concertos - BWV1041; BWV1042

**Mira Glodeanu** vn **Ausonia** / **Frédéric Haas** hpd  
Hitasura © HSP001 (71' • DDD)



This is an unusual Bach coupling, but to give solo spotlights to both the founding members of Ausonia seems as good a reason as any. The repertoire does push them into a vast competitive field, however, and probably few will care much about the specialness of the running order when there are so many other performances of all four pieces out there to be sampled.

I fear, however, that these ones will not make much headway against the likes of Andrew Manze and Rachel Podger on the one hand, or Trevor Pinnock and Andreas Staier on the other (to name only some of the period-instrument rivals). True, they have the ideas to make them distinctive – the odd bit of unexpected articulation or rhythmic definition from Mira Glodeanu, some freewheeling ornamentation from Frédéric Haas in the slow movement of the D minor (BWV1052), and a generally bold approach to rhetorical timing and structural delineation – but overall they are rather hard to love. For that the sound must carry some of the blame; though recorded in a church, the balance is dry, with a closeness on the six string players that does little to flatter their intonation and blend, and denies comfort to the ear.

But the frequent small hesitations and snatches at pulse and phrasing are also more irritating than thought-provoking, and there are times such as the middle section of the first movement of the E major Harpsichord Concerto (BWV1053) when the momentum simply seems to be running out. Unfortunately, such moments outweigh the

better ones, such as the air of concentration conjured up by Glodeanu in the slow movement of the E major Violin Concerto (BWV1042) or the brusque energy of the first movement of the A minor (BWV1041). Sad to say, two discs containing better performances of these individual works would still make better value than this one of them all. **Lindsay Kemp**

## Bartók · Ghedini · Hindemith · Rota

'Music for String Orchestra'

**Bartók** Divertimento, Sz113 **Ghedini** Violin

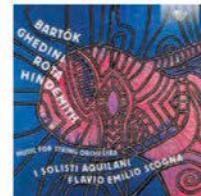
Concerto<sup>a</sup> **Hindemith** *Trauermusik*<sup>b</sup>

**Rota** Concerto for Strings

<sup>a</sup>**Daniele Orlando** vn <sup>b</sup>**Francesco Fiore** va

**I Solisti Aquilani** / **Flavio Emilio Scogna**

Brilliant ® 95223 (75' • DDD)



This interesting programme offers a revealing glimpse at how the Baroque concerto grosso form, or something very like it, was revisited in the 20th century. The final item, Hindemith's *Trauermusik*, was written the day after King George V's death (the composer was in London at the time); here the viola player Francesco Fiore gives a performance full of feeling, and while I Solisti Aquilana might not offer quite the last word in refined execution, they provide a worthy accompaniment.

The violas also come off well in the finale of the programme's undoubtedly masterpiece, Bartók's roughly contemporaneous *Divertimento*, though there's some coarse-grained playing elsewhere and comparing the opening *Allegro non troppo* with, say, recordings conducted by Zoltán Kocsis (Hungaroton), Iván Fischer (Decca) or Rudolf Barshai (Decca Eloquence) helps identify the main ingredient missing here, namely rustic energy. Still, I liked the sense of hushed expectation that Flavio Emilio Scogna achieves in the *Molto adagio* second movement and he



Hans Knappertsbusch: a post-Wagnerian take on Beethoven

directs well-judged performances of the other two works programmed.

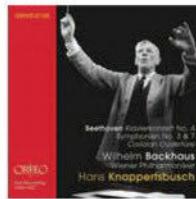
Ghedini's Violin Concerto (1947) opens in a belligerent mood, Daniele Orlando goading his sparring partners on with plenty of spark. The second-movement *Andante fiorito* is pleasingly whimsical; there's a dynamic Rondo, a heartfelt *Adagio* and a finale that opens in *Jaws* mode. Nino Rota's Concerto for Strings (1964-65) opens lyrically, proceeds to a scherzo that sounds as if based on one of Shostakovich's ballet suites; then Rota treats us to a quasi-Bachian 'aria' and a very filmic-sounding finale. Scogna's performance is roughly on a par with Paolo Pessina's for Naxos (8 570194), maybe rather heavier on its feet. The recording quality throughout matches the playing, thoroughly competent if nothing out of the ordinary. **Rob Cowan**

## Beethoven

Piano Concerto No 4, Op 58<sup>a</sup>. Symphonies - No 3, 'Eroica', Op 55<sup>b</sup>; No 7, Op 92<sup>c</sup>. Overture 'Coriolan', Op 62<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Wilhelm Backhaus pf Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Hans Knappertsbusch

Orfeo mono ② C901 162B (139' • ADD)  
<sup>acd</sup>Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, January 17, 1954. <sup>b</sup>Broadcast performance, February 17, 1962



Here is Beethoven, Viennese Beethoven, under a conductor who remained impervious to all fads and fashions, save those of the post-Wagnerian age in which he was raised. Thus the *Eroica* Symphony emerges as a slow-moving epic, a looming edifice seen through a glass darkly. Had Beethoven been privy to the events of the 20th century, Knappertsbusch seems to suggest, he wouldn't have thought civilisation much improved. Cause for rejoicing there was not.

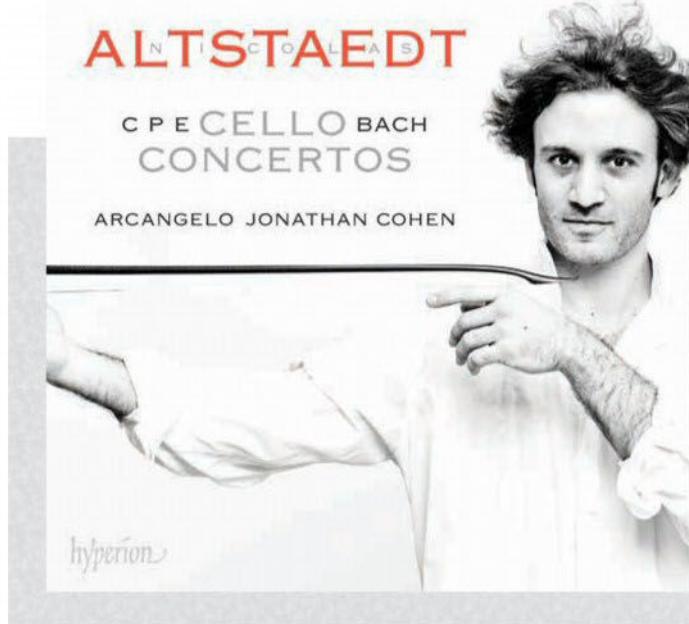
The performance of the *Eroica* dates from 1962. The other three items chronicle a concert Knappertsbusch conducted in the Vienna Musikverein in January 1954. The *Coriolan* Overture has been moved to the start of disc 2, where it prefaces the *Eroica*: a suitable juxtaposition since, in

Knappertsbusch's reading, it is a work of similar temper, the theatrical and philosophical elements held in the nicest possible balance.

It also means that disc 1 begins with the opening of the Fourth Piano Concerto, magically annunciated by Wilhelm Backhaus on one of his beloved Bösendorfers. Backhaus was one of the Fourth Concerto's finest exponents, though rarely written of as such on this side of the English Channel. An exception was Hubert Foss. Writing in these pages, he commended Backhaus's 1950 recording of the concerto with Clemens Krauss and the VPO (Decca, 1/52) for its artistic restraint 'with the design of each movement beautifully laid out before us and no attempt at any kind of display on the part of the soloist'.

The wonder of this live 1954 Austrian Radio recording is that, while the performance itself is every bit as fine as the 1950 studio version, the recording is infinitely superior, with a warmth and body to the sound which the 1950 Decca recording conspicuously lacks. All in all, this is Backhaus's finest account of the concerto

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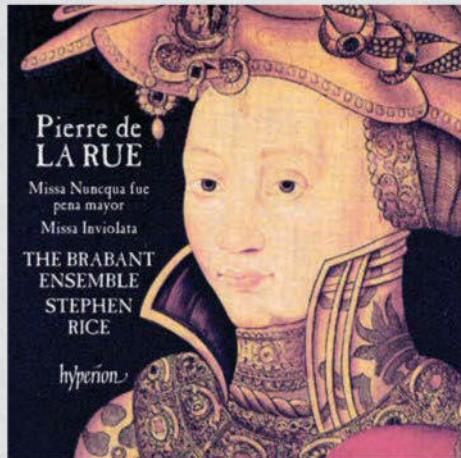
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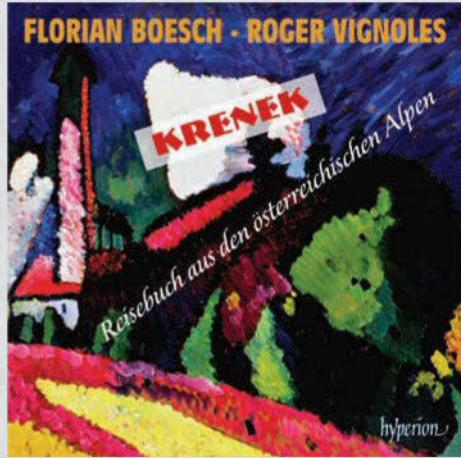
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András Schiff and members of Cappella Andrea Barca play Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert (review on page 48)

on record. The only times he threatens to overturn the apple cart are in the two cadenzas, the first by Beethoven, the second an overlong affair by Backhaus himself.

The performance of the Seventh Symphony, with which the 1952 concert ended, is a law unto itself. Unlike Furtwängler, Knappertsbusch wasn't much inclined to anchor his readings in analyses thought out ahead of time. Rather they appear to be fashioned out the Beethovenian clay on a somewhat ad hoc basis. Since this is a species of conducting you will seek out in vain today, the set is the perfect time-machine in which travel back to a riper, more ruminative age when speed and surface excitement did not entirely rule the roost.

**Richard Osborne**

## Beethoven

'Resound, Vol 3'  
Egmont, Op 84<sup>a</sup> (with <sup>b</sup>German and <sup>c</sup>English narration). Die Weihe des Hauses, Op 124  
<sup>a</sup>Bernarda Bobro sop<sup>b</sup>Herbert Föttinger, <sup>c</sup>John Malkovich spkrs Vienna Academy Orchestra / Martin Haselböck  
Alpha  $\otimes$   $\otimes$  ALPHA472 (111' • DDD • T/t)



It is something of an irony that Goethe conceived his five-act prose tragedy *Egmont* to include music but provided none, while the incidental music that Beethoven later provided (with Goethe's knowledge and approval) has always struggled to find a life beyond the play.

Even on record, chances to hear anything other than the famous Overture have tended to be few and far between. For many years the field was held by George Szell's 1969 Vienna Philharmonic recording with soprano Pilar Lorengar and the celebrated Burgtheater actor Klausjürgen Wussow narrating a shortened version of the Goethe-derived text which Grillparzer added in 1834 to provide context for Beethoven's music (Decca, 10/70 – nla).

This new Alpha Classics recording is the first to offer both a German version of the Grillparzer re-enactment and an English

one. For though the sung interludes remain in German (the CD book has full texts and translations) the narration itself is a new Grillparzer- and Goethe-derived English adaptation by Christopher Hampton. At its first outing at the Granada Festival in 2015, Charles Dance was the narrator; here it is the mighty, no-holds-barred John Malkovich.

Martin Haselböck and the period instrumentalists of his splendid Orchester Wiener Akademie give an appropriately vibrant and battle-hardened account of music which Beethoven wrote in 1809-10 when Vienna, like Count Egmont's 16th-century Brussels, was an occupied war-zone. Bernarda Bobro, who was clearly born to sing such roles as Beethoven's Marzelline and Johann Strauss's Adele, is delightful in Klärchen's two brief but engagingly worked solo numbers.

The recordings were made in Vienna's Josefstadt Theatre, for whose re-opening in 1822 Beethoven wrote his ceremonious and dashing *Consecration of the House* Overture. It makes a rousing end to a very collectable disc.

**Richard Osborne**

## Beethoven · Mozart · Schubert



Beethoven Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15<sup>a</sup>

Mozart Piano Concerto No 22, K482<sup>a</sup>

Schubert Symphony No 5, D485

Cappella Andrea Barca / Sir András Schiff <sup>a</sup>pf

Video director Hella-Brit Giese

C Major Entertainment <sup>F</sup> DVD 736508;

736604 (109' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the Great Hall of the Salzburg

Mozarteum Foundation, January 24 & 25, 2015



This DVD preserves highlights of a pair of concerts featuring András Schiff during last year's Mozartwoche at the Mozarteum Foundation in Salzburg. His accompanists are his own orchestra, Cappella Andrea Barca, of which Schiff says 'there is no room for egoism here' – despite naming the ensemble after himself. The piano is a Bechstein, although the booklet contains no further details. It's a less beefy sound than a Steinway, and this suits it to Schiff's take on late Mozart and early Beethoven.

The Beethoven he places firmly in the post-Mozartian lineage. This is not Beethoven the nascent revolutionary, angrily tearing up the keyboard, but Beethoven the classicist, learning from his Viennese-school elders and basing his outlook on Mozart's two late C major concertos, K467 and (especially) K503.

The Bechstein is especially suited to Mozart and the slow movement of K482 is a highlight, with some particularly rapt playing from pianist and orchestra alike. In between comes Schubert's vernal Fifth Symphony, conducted from memory and clearly with affection, although without undue lingering.

It's not entirely accurate to say that Schiff directs the concertos from the keyboard: at the openings and whenever he has more than a few bars' rest, he jumps up to shape the music by hand. Not that he doesn't direct from the keyboard too: there's a delicious moment in the Beethoven when he turns to the woodwind and tootles an imaginary pipe at them. The camerawork is fine (the bassoonist is clearly a favourite of the director) and a camera at the end of the keyboard offers a good view of Schiff's technique. The acoustic is a little boxy but the ear soon adjusts. Only Schiff's facial contortions may be offputting to some: they range from a beatific smile to a rather unfortunate pout.

David Threasher

## Brahms

Serenade No 1, Op 11. Variations on a Theme

by Haydn, 'Chorale St Antoni', Op 56a

The Hague Residentie Orchestra /

Jan Willem de Vriend

Challenge Classics <sup>F</sup> CC72692

(63' • DDD/DSD)



Would it be fanciful to suggest that there's something distinctly Netherlandish about this interpretation of Brahms's D major Serenade? Jan Willem de Vriend emphasises the music's rusticity while maintaining a tight grip on orchestral detail – an odd balance of exuberance and sobriety that, at its best, evokes a peasant scene by Bruegel.

The Hague Residentie Orchestra adopts many aspects of historically informed performance practice, with minimal vibrato from the strings and natural-sounding horns, creating a varied, vibrant colour palette that's particularly effective in boisterous passages (try, say, 2'58" in the first movement). There's subtle expressivity, too: note the way the players heed Brahms's *dolce* indication in the eerie opening section of the first Scherzo, for instance, or the shapely phrasing of the first movement's lyrical second theme.

At times, however, de Vriend's taut control serves to neutralise the music's character. Thus, while he sets an appropriately flowing tempo for the *Adagio ma non troppo*, the phrases often seem imprisoned by the bar-lines. And in the final *Allegro*, although the dotted rhythms have a delightful snap and the winds and brass buzz merrily, there's an underlying stiffness – a metric regularity – that prevents the music from taking wing.

De Vriend's way with the *Haydn Variations* is similarly frustrating. Following a sonorous and delightfully phrased presentation of the St Antoni Chorale, the conductor pushes too hard in the first variation (it's marked *poco più animato* – a little more animated – after all), leaning too heavily on the down-beats. The second variation lacks the requisite faux-gypsy fire, and most of the subsequent variations could use a generous dollop of charm and wit. The recorded sound is vivid but slightly tubby. Andrew Farach-Colton

## Gershwin

Piano Concerto<sup>a</sup>. An American in Paris. Of Thee I Sing – Overture. Three Preludes (orch Bargy)

<sup>a</sup>Lincoln Mayorga pf

Harmonie Ensemble, New York / Steven Richman

harmonia Mundi <sup>F</sup> HMU90 7658 (56' • DDD)

## Gershwin

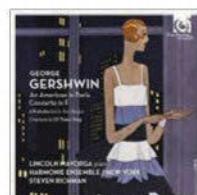
Piano Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Rhapsody in Blue<sup>a</sup>.

Variations on 'I got rhythm'<sup>a</sup>. Eight Preludes

Mark Bebbington pf

<sup>a</sup>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Leon Botstein

Somm <sup>B</sup> <sup>2</sup> SOMMCD260 (85' • DDD)



Steven Richman is to Gershwin as Charles Mackerras was to Janáček. For years he has tirelessly worked to free the composer's scores from accumulated bad habits and spurious editing in pursuit of authenticity and musical sense. I'm sure this extends to his new Gershwin release's close-up, slightly dry yet judiciously balanced sound, which is aesthetically akin to the best-sounding orchestral radio airchecks from the 1930s and '40s. In his vivacious and deliciously characterised reading of *An American in Paris*, Richman restores Gershwin's original saxophone parts and other details that have got lost in the shuffle for nearly 90 years.

The Concerto in F hasn't sounded so fresh, so idiomatic and so rhythmically alive since Earl Wild's classic RCA recording, no small thanks to piano soloist Lincoln Mayorga's ability to fuse his brilliant classical technique with a genuine feeling for Gershwin's syncopated language and bluesy inflections. Richman also presents the first studio recordings of Louis Katzman's zesty arrangement of the *Of Thee I Sing* Overture as originally broadcast in 1934 (it's lighter and shorter than Robert Russell Bennett's familiar version) and the *Three Preludes* in Roy Bargy's tasteful orchestrations. No Gershwin fan should miss this disc.

By contrast, the performances by Mark Bebbington and Leon Botstein reek of accumulated 'tradition', particularly in their bloated, pretentious treatment of *Rhapsody in Blue*. It's not so much a matter of slow tempi (the positively glacial E major theme, for instance) as it is the performance's overall inertia and lack of direction. The *ritards* at ends of sections, the micromanaged phrasings and other expressive notions frequently cause the music to stop dead in its tracks. Occasionally Bebbington tosses off flashy passagework directly and exuberantly, yet at other times he falls prey to cutesy diminuendos and prissily clipped articulation (at 2'44", for example, where the delicious *scherzando*-like writing deflates and dies on the vine).



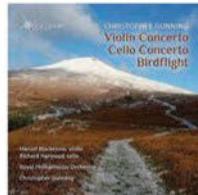
Pavel Gomziakov with the 'Chevillard' Stradivarius cello on which he has recorded Haydn's concertos (review on page 50)

As for the *I Got Rhythm* Variations, the stiffly phrased, under-tempo and heavy-handed main theme alone warrants a new title: 'I got no rhythm'.

The Concerto fares better: the outer movements' tempi fall within conventional parameters, and Bebbington's expressive leeway in unaccompanied passages befits the music's nature. While the second movement's first theme can accommodate Botstein's protracted tempo (thanks in part to the Royal Philharmonic's exceptional yet unidentified first-desk trumpet soloist), things turn overly precious and mincing when the piano enters. A bonus disc offers all eight Gershwin Preludes: the aforementioned three in their original piano versions, plus five posthumously published items. Bebbington plays these pieces simply and sensitively, freed at last from the orchestral crush. **Jed Distler**

## Gunning

Violin Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Cello Concerto<sup>b</sup>. *Birdflight*  
<sup>a</sup>Harriet Mackenzie vn <sup>b</sup>Richard Harwood vc Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Christopher Gunning Discovery Music & Vision (75' • DDD)



In the booklet Christopher Gunning recalls how, in 2012, a memorable ascent of Sugar Loaf in the Black Mountains near Abergavenny played a vital role in establishing the 'predominantly lyrical and melodic but also quite florid' character of his large-scale Violin Concerto, ideas for which had begun taking shape the previous year. The resulting canvas has something of the shimmering luminosity, graceful poise and soaring lyricism of the violin concertos by Szymanowski and Rubbra, albeit without those masterpieces' sublime subtlety of expression, organic inevitability and distinctive thematic profile. No matter, Gunning's remains a thoroughly rewarding, immensely likeable achievement, and Harriet Mackenzie proves an outstandingly assured and sensitive advocate. What's more, she is partnered with the utmost sympathy by the RPO under the composer's expert baton. The score, by

the way, bears an affectionate dedication to flautist Catherine Handley, whose striking photo of the Monmouthshire Sugar Loaf adorns the cover.

If I'm marginally less smitten with the Cello Concerto, there's still no denying its generosity of spirit, deft craftsmanship and abundant songfulness. Gunning relates how the opening movement (subtitled 'Waltz Memories') was inspired by an episode during a visit to a care home, where he witnessed music's rejuvenatory powers at first hand, while the substantial finale ('Lament, with Variations') seems to acknowledge its counterpart in Walton's sole, comparably nostalgic contribution to the genre. Needless to say, Richard Harwood gives a thoroughly convincing – and convinced – account, and once again the RPO respond eagerly both here and in *Birdflight*, a 12-minute orchestral essay of no mean skill and communicative flair.

Beautifully engineered by Mike Hatch in Southwark's Henry Wood Hall, this impressive issue will, I fancy, make lots of new friends for the music of Christopher Gunning.

**Andrew Achenbach**

**Haydn**

Cello Concertos - No 1, HobVIIb/1; No 2, HobVIIb/2. Violin Concerto No 1, HobVIIa/1 - Adagio (arr Gomziakov). Symphony No 13 - Adagio cantabile  
**Pavel Gomziakov** *vc* **Gulbenkian Orchestra**  
 Onyx (F) ONYX4151 (60' • DDD)



Great musical instruments weren't made to gather dust in museum cases, so when Pavel Gomziakov released his new recording of Haydn's cello concertos I couldn't get my hands on it fast enough. This is the first commercial recording featuring the 'Chevillard, King of Portugal' 1725 Stradivarius cello, created by the luthier when he was 81, which had sat in state in Lisbon's National Museum of Music since 1937 and played just once annually for a strictly limited museum audience.

It's been a fascinating album to get to know, too. Unsurprisingly, the cello is indisputably the star of the show here, from the relatively up-close miking to the programming itself, which goes all out to show off the instrument's *cantabile* tone by prefacing each of the two concertos (programmed in reverse order) with a Haydn *adagio*. First, Gomziakov's own arrangement of the Violin Concerto in C's middle movement, allowing the instrument to strut its soft, clear, upper-register stuff. Then, separating the two concertos, the cello-solo *Adagio* from Symphony No 13.

These are immensely tender, intimate readings from Gomziakov; it almost feels as though we're intruding on a private little love affair between him and the instrument, as he explores just how beautiful he can get it to sound. At points in the *Adagio* of the C major Concerto (No 1) this approach tips slightly into soupiness for me. However, overall, this predominantly tender, *cantabile* approach makes for a refreshingly distinctive reading, even while meaning that this isn't the most colouristically varied recording. The way Gomziakov's tone grows through his sustained notes is particularly lovely. Similarly, the orchestra (under concertmaster Erik Heide) place the emphasis on smooth, soft elegance; there's not a shade of the Baroque bristle of, say, Edgar Moreau's recent high-octane recording with Il Pomo d'Oro (Erato, 12/15). As such, whether this recording presses your buttons, beyond the sheer interest of hearing this clearly wonderful instrument, will be very much down to personal taste. **Charlotte Gardner**

**Khachaturian · Rautavaara**

**Khachaturian Flute Concerto**<sup>a</sup> **Rautavaara**  
 Dances with the Winds, Op 69 (two versions)<sup>b</sup>  
**Sharon Bezaly** // <sup>a</sup>**São Paulo Symphony Orchestra** /  
**Enrique Diemecke**, <sup>b</sup>**Lahti Symphony Orchestra** /  
**Dima Slobodeniouk**  
 BIS (F) BIS1849 (79' • DDD/DSD)



Jean-Pierre Rampal's transcription for flute of Aram Khachaturian's Violin Concerto works better on disc than in the concert hall, where the exotic – not to say rowdy – orchestration can overwhelm the soloist. Sharon Bezaly makes a wonderful case for it on this new disc, throwing herself into the exuberant Armenian rhythms with abandon. The first-movement cadenza, composed by Rampal, who was given carte blanche by the composer, is highly persuasive, although her tone isn't as full and lush in the *Andante sostenuto* as on Emmanuel Pahud's recording. Enrique Diemecke gives the São Paulo Symphony full rein in the boisterous finale, Bezaly softly lyrical in its more reflective moments.

BIS has a very special relationship with Rautavaara's Flute Concerto *Dances with the Winds*. Robert von Bahr, founder of the label, and his wife co-commissioned it in 1974. Gunilla von Bahr gave the premiere in Stockholm. Originally it was written for four flutes (flute, piccolo, alto flute, bass flute) but the composer rewrote the bass flute section for alto to make it slightly more practical. Bezaly gives us both versions here, though possibly only keen students of the flute would wish to listen to both back to back.

In Rautavaara's spare orchestral writing, I often find the influence of Sibelius, the weighty opening movement here being a good example. The switch to bass flute (tr 4, 4'05") creates a ghostly effect, over spectral string tremolos. Bezaly is lively in the piccolo-led second movement, with its hints of fairground dancing bears. The meditative alto flute dominates the hypnotic slow movement, before bass and normal flute joust with contrabassoon in the finale...before it's all repeated. An enjoyable disc nonetheless.

**Mark Pullinger**

*Rautavaara – selected comparison:*  
*Alanko, Lahti SO, Vänskä*  
 (5/97, 12/99) (BIS) BIS-CD687 or BIS-CD1038  
*Khachaturian – selected comparison:*  
*Pabud, Zurich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman*  
 (11/03) (EMI) 557563-2

**Mahler**

**Symphony No 5. Des Knaben Wunderhorn**<sup>a</sup> -  
 Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt; Das  
 Irdische Leben; Revelge; Rheinlegendchen;  
 Der Tamboursg'sell; Urlicht; Wo die schönen  
 Trompeten blasen

**Matthias Goerne** *bar*

**Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Andris Nelson**

*Video director Michael Beyer*

Accentus (F) DVD ACC20354; (F) ACC10354  
 (122' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HDMA5.1,  
 DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Concert Hall of KKL Luzern, August 19 & 20, 2015



Andris Nelsons is a conductor with whom I feel more and more kinship. Making music is so much about making choices and even a composer such as Mahler who gives so much information about the hows and whys of his scores needs an imaginative representative to carry his spirit into the moment of performance. This account of the Fifth Symphony does just that – and, of course, Nelsons has the finest of instruments in the form of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. Their magnificent playing here is suffused with the memory of their creator, Claudio Abbado, and re-energised with the new-found dynamism of the visionary Latvian.

Nelsons takes his time over everything – including the contentious *Adagietto*. The opening funeral march – launched by the plangent trumpet of Reinhold Friedrich (a player who finds music and tone even *in extremis*) – has an affectingly 'cantorial' quality, measured (very) and super-expressive. And Nelsons carries that fierce intensity into the second movement 'flipside' of the first, relishing the dark saturations and finding something really still and profound in the slow incantation for solo cellos near the heart of the movement. Old voices in mourning. The excellent video production allows us to see a lot of Nelsons and in this frozen moment in time we realise why it takes as long as it takes. Equally telling – and so much more affecting when you can see Nelsons's face – is the hugely expressive rubato he brings to the exultant climax where we glimpse the symphony's thrilling coda.

Taking one's time over the huge Scherzo is always the right course of action – Mahler was clear about that – and Nelsons relishes the characterful 'diversions' and sumptuous moments of reflection in the marvellous first horn, Alessio Allevi – moments which open up thrilling vistas. The silence of

nature simply stopping and listening is clearly what Mahler had in his mind's ear. Those pauses must be respected.

The *Adagietto* is said to have grown too slow according to certain commentators and Mahler himself suggested as much. But again you watch Nelsons and you hear the lightness on the string and the gently flecked harp, and it just 'breathes'. It might even increase the sensation of the *Adagietto* music airborne in the finale. Nelsons and his orchestra are predictably joyous and the coming-together of the earlier chorale and delirious helter-skeltering strings is ridiculously exciting.

First come eight of the *Wunderhorn* song settings with Matthias Goerne – but no texts on the screen or in the booklet. Not good. Goerne sings beautifully (though with a little too much swaying and hand-play for my taste); and even where one might prefer the maternal contralto sound – in 'Das irdische Leben' and 'Urlicht' (which are magically juxtaposed) – he is persuasive. The latter is blessed by majestic close-harmony trumpets and the most rapturous of oboe solos.

But, of course, the two military songs – 'Revelge' and 'Der Tamboursg'sell' (the former with its trenchant echoes of the Sixth Symphony) – are in a natural place

for Goerne; and while I would have liked a little more verbal theatricality, his darkest colours chime with Mahler's grim wind-band underscoring the drummer boy's heartbreak 'gute Nacht' with real pathos. **Edward Seckerson**

### Mendelssohn · Widmann

**Mendelssohn** Symphonies – No 1, Op 11;

No 4, 'Italian', Op 90 **Widmann** Ad absurdum<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Sergei Nakariakov** tpt

**Irish Chamber Orchestra / Jörg Widmann**

Orfeo © C914 161A (72' • DDD)



The teenage Mendelssohn laid down a gauntlet with his First Symphony (a decade earlier, Schubert had done the same with the Fourth): to seize the urgency of C minor without indulging Romantic anachronism or succumbing to the bluster of a precocious answer to Beethoven's Fifth. Jörg Widmann meets the challenge with vigour and in some style. The overture-like gestures of the outer movements are swifter and more agile than his full-symphonic competitors, and the Irish Chamber Orchestra are

more sweetly blended than the period-style Netherlands Symphony Orchestra. Having begun with a mellifluous pair of clarinets, the *Andante* moves on with a tension and seriousness of purpose that eludes recent and more placid recordings.

With a composer's instinct for the telling idea, Widmann uncovers some magic in Mendelssohn's transition back from hymn-like Trio to off-beat Minuet. However, few will buy a full-price disc for an underrated but nonetheless prentice symphony. Competition is stiffer in the *Italian*, which gets off to a short-winded and unsteady start, with uneven tuning between brass and vibrato-light strings. Widmann and his players also take time to find a solemn centre of gravity in the walking bass of the *Andante*. I enjoyed the contrast between the poised Minuet and lazy swing of the horns in the Trio, and the whirling finale is deftly done, but without the masked violence of the CBSO and Edward Gardner.

*Ad absurdum* would make an effective contrast in concert. A 15-minute trumpet concerto marked *sempre prestissimo*, it puts to the test the astonishing virtuosity of Sergei Nakariakov. Or does it send up a self-defeating obsession with virtuosity? I am not convinced that Widmann can have it both ways. **Peter Quantrill**

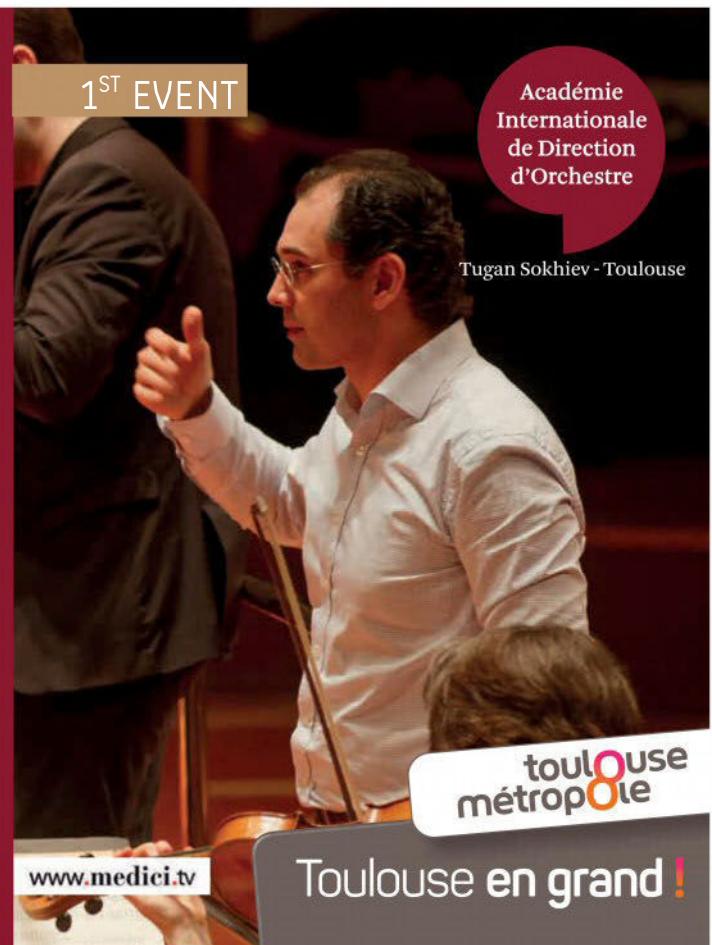
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Osmo Vänskä continues his second Sibelius symphony cycle at Minnesota Hall

**Symphony No 1 – selected comparison:**

Netherlands SO, de Vriend (10/14) (CHAL) CC72641

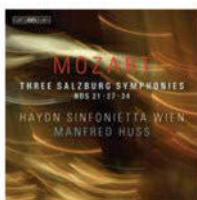
**Symphony No 4 – selected comparison:**

CBSO, Gardner (2/14) (CHAN) CHSA5132

**Mozart****Three Salzburg Symphonies'**Symphonies - No 21, K134<sup>a</sup>; No 27, K199<sup>a</sup>; No 34, K338 (with Menuetto, K409)**Haydn Sinfonietta Wien / Manfred Huss**

BIS (F) BIS2218 (67' • DDD)

\*Recorded live 2006 and previously released



BIS remasters recordings of two symphonies that had limited circulation a decade ago and adds a new one of K338 for a diverting snapshot of Mozart's Salzburg music. The earlier two symphonies are little more than entertaining sequences of early-Classical sound effects, while the later work shows Mozart embarking upon the synthesis of *galant* melody and Haydn-esque motivic writing that heralded his mature style.

Some of the sound effects are ear-catching indeed: there's a passage in the Trio of

K134's Minuet that sticks in the memory as it darkens into D minor and alternates braying horns with pizzicato violins over buzzing viola quavers, even if its finale is a long-legged, ramshackle affair that really only holds together through sheer force of will. Manfred Huss's ear for detail and the crack playing of the Haydn Sinfonietta Wien mean that this entertainment music is treated with utmost respect, resulting in fizzing performances that are truly worth hearing.

K338 presents a whole new concept of entertainment. The last of Mozart's Salzburg symphonies, its trumpet-bedecked opening call to attention and its new-found confidence in melodic development made it a favourite of Beecham's. For this performance, Huss makes it clear in the booklet that he has deployed a bigger orchestra in a larger hall – Mozart especially enjoyed hearing his music played by augmented ensembles. The sound matching between earlier and later recordings is ideal; the smaller venue for the K134 and K199 renders the instruments especially lifelike in contrast to the more marmoreal realisation of K338, a sound that especially suits this larger-scale work. **David Threasher**

**Rott****Symphony No 1**

Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra /

Constantin Trinks

Profil (F) PH15051 (58' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, November 8, 2015



Expanded for the occasion, the Mozarteum Orchestra gets off to a sluggish start in the lengthy (patient, if you're disposed to be kind) preamble of Rott's Symphony, with brass behind the beat and strings sketching out the two minutes of unvaried cross-string figures. The live recording comes in and out of focus, as perhaps it must, and the engineers give the winds a helping hand with the counterpoint at 5'25" and do what they can to mitigate Rott's wearing dependence on the triangle for all-purpose sizzle.

Constantin Trinks is inclined towards expansive tempi which lend inflated grandeur to the *Adagio* and play up the obvious debts to Bruckner and Wagner. Leif Segerstam (BIS) is two minutes

slower and impossibly cumbersome; Paavo Järvi (RCA) two minutes quicker, more warmly and flexibly shaped and inspiring playing of genuine distinction from the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. All the best and most original ideas in the piece duly noted and stolen by Rott's fellow pupil Mahler respond to a quickness of mind and agility of performance: the chromatic cries of pain in the *Adagio*; the wild jumble of folk-scenes in Rott's Scherzo which looks back to Schumann's Second and Bruckner's Fourth as much as it anticipates Mahler's Fifth. Järvi is in his element here, magnificently obstreperous, whereas Trinks is stately and rather po-faced.

The finale, as so often, is the most problematic movement, and here his belief in the piece (also expressed in a booklet-note) shines through, with a thoughtfully staged and spaced introduction that makes some sense of the ensuing clamour. Surely only one recording is needed of this baggy curio, and Järvi is it, but Trinks offers a committed alternative view.

**Peter Quattrill**

*Selected comparisons:*

*Norrköping SO, Segerstam (11/92) (BIS) BIS-CD563*

*Frankfurt RSO, P Järvi (RCA) 88691 96319-2*

## Sibelius

Symphonies - No 3, Op 52;  
No 6, Op 104; No 7, Op 105  
Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänska

BIS (F) BIS2006 (82' • DDD)



As Osmo Vänska powers into the home straight of his Minnesota Sibelius cycle, the first thing that strikes one about his newly minted account of the Third Symphony is the keenness of the articulation. It's the aural equivalent of crisp, cold air.

Vänska's Sibelius is all about clarity – of rhythm, of texture, of intention. It is zealously unfussy and entirely without exaggeration. But it can stop you in your tracks. The 'no-man's-land' we enter a few pages into the Third – a moment or two of reflection in a barren landscape – can rarely have sounded more like Sibelius's 'pure spring water'. But in the suddenness of the hush Vänska manages to change the way the air moves in Minnesota Hall. I love the simplicity and limpidity of the second movement, and the gathering of energy at the heart of

the third movement is tremendous – that's where the resplendent final procession is generated.

The Third and Sixth Symphonies feel even more closely related than usual. The quietism of the Sixth speaks volumes. If ever a piece existed between the notes, this is it. In the seemingly negligible the considerable is to be found – like the tremulous darkening before the close of the first movement; a major event writ small. And that is especially startling on account of the luminosity surrounding it. There really isn't much to say about a performance that just feels perfectly balanced – in music as in nature. I will add, though, that the evaporating final chord is startling.

And so to the almost but not quite conclusive Seventh – epic in all but duration, as grand and elemental as it is concise. Small ideas grow great with inevitability – a testament to Sibelius's genius and Vänska's integrity. And it sounds splendid. This of all the symphonies seems to come up through the bass-lines, and as we approach the second major upheaval, the chromatic undulation of strings – the movement of tectonic plates – is perfectly in balance with what is happening above.

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Florilegium celebrate their quarter-century with an enticing disc of Telemann concertos

One just knows that the ear-pricking clarity throughout these performances is of Vänskä's and not the balance engineer's making. And as for that eleventh-hour resolution into C major, it is as emphatic as it is precipitous. The full stop that's more of a question mark. **Edward Seckerson**

### Telemann

Ihr Völker hört, TWV1:921<sup>a</sup>. Concertos – TWV43:a3; TWV51:D2; TWV52:a1; TWV53:E1. Overture for Monseigneur le Landgrave de Darmstadt, TWV55:F16

<sup>a</sup>Clare Wilkinson *mez*

Florilegium / Ashley Solomon *fl*

Channel Classics *CCS38616* (79' • DDD)



This attractive mixed programme of Telemann's works featuring flute or recorder has been designed by Ashley Solomon to celebrate Florilegium's 25th anniversary. The triple concerto for flute, oboe d'amore and viola d'amore in E major (TWV53:E1) stands out as one of the composer's most beguiling masterpieces: the limpid opening *Andante* sounds like a serene evocation of sunrise that anticipates the

mature Haydn by several decades; the soloists Solomon, Alexandra Bellamy and Bojan Ćišić play with elegant finesse, and also conjure up refined melancholy in an intimately conversational Siciliana.

The double concerto for recorder and viola da gamba in A minor (TWV52:a1) is a charming example of Telemann's taste for synthesising French and Italian musical styles with elements of Polish folk music; Florilegium's civilised elegance in the French-style *Grave*, gently Italianate sway in the *Allegro*, and Solomon's duet with gambist Reiko Ichise in the *Dolce* has pastoral sensitivity. Always played with cultivated refinement, Florilegium provide a thoughtful alternative to the more firmly textured and zestier approach taken by La Stagione Frankfurt (CPO, 2015).

At the heart of the programme is *Ihr Völker hört* (TWV1:921), a cantata for solo voice and obbligato instrument (played here on the flute by Solomon) that was published in the first instalment of the series *Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst* (Hamburg, 1725–26). Clare Wilkinson's softly convivial and articulate singing communicates the cheerful Epiphany text. Solomon takes centre stage in a flute concerto in D major (TWV51:D2), but my ears were drawn equally to the

sympathetic continuo-playing of theorist David Miller and harpsichordist Terence Charlston.

The bigger-scale finale is an F major overture and dance suite (TWV55:F16), dedicated to the Landgrave of Darmstadt and probably written late in Telemann's long life; in the turbulent Ramellian 'Tempête' a pair of horns and bassoon are on thrilling form, so it is a pity that half of the dances could not fit on the disc – but they are available to download. **David Vickers**

### Weinberger

Overture to a Chivalrous Play. Six Bohemian Songs and Dances. Passacaglia<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Jörg Strohhoff *org* Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Gerd Albrecht

Capriccio *C5272* (56' • DDD)

Recorded 2000, 2002



The first significant point to strike home about this varied programme is the excellence of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester's playing under the patient baton of Gerd Albrecht, who died a couple of years ago and was always at his best when

# GRAMOPHONE Collector

## MULTI-MEDIUM STRAVINSKY

**David Gutman** listens to a trio of discs focusing on Stravinsky's ballets and showing them in their orchestral and pianistic guises



Vladimir Jurowski conducts a Stravinsky programme with the London Philharmonic Orchestra

**B**efore the advent of commercial recording, orchestral works often found their biggest audiences through piano transcriptions designed to be performed at home. But why the contemporary vogue for monochrome Stravinsky on disc? There are some valid arguments in favour. Piano duet reductions of the familiar Russian ballets are precisely what would have been heard during rehearsals at Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. These were the scores Stravinsky carried with him: we know that he and Debussy played through *The Rite of Spring* in this format. Perhaps it's worth recalling that the four-hands one-keyboard version was published in 1913, eight years before the full orchestral score. And in the case of *Petrushka*, Stravinsky was quite happy to cut and paste his material to produce a virtuoso three-movement recital piece for Arthur Rubinstein. The radical abruptness of his orchestral writing can be heard as an extension of new ways of thinking about his own instrument. It might even be argued that a first-rate rendition of this kind makes the harmonic structure more apparent, enabling one to latch on to elements otherwise lost in the welter of orchestral effects.

In the face of well-publicised celebrity recordings which either overdub a single player or transfer the music to two pianos, the latest offerings are more 'authentic'. That said, you never know quite what you're going to hear with these scores:

there are lines in small type that can be incorporated into performances more readily where a degree of trickery is employed. On a single piano whole passages need to be played with either the wrist up with fingers at right angles to the keyboard, or the wrist down with fingers crawling upwards from underneath. For enthusiasts that's part of the fun, like the guest appearances of triangle and (dropped) tambourine in *Petrushka*.

The handsomely presented release from Basel is the third in a series in which the great Russian ballets are presented in tandem with the piano arrangements in which versatile maestro **Dennis Russell Davies** is joined by his wife, **Maki Namekawa**. Neither rendering has the visceral playfulness usually associated with this repertoire. My own benchmark for the duet version is the Nonesuch recording by Ursula Oppens and her onetime duo partner Paul Jacobs (Arbiter, A/08), a persuasive advocate of the modern and the recherché who died prematurely, an early victim of Aids-related illness. Where that vintage team drive the music forward with invigorating rhythmic snap, Russell Davies and Namekawa take their time and explore the byways. In its more motoric stretches they expose accompanimental figuration in novel ways, seemingly looking back to Satie and forwards to Philip Glass at the expense of more local folk-related colour. Painstaking percussive detail, tuned and untuned, is exceptionally audible in the

similarly aligned orchestral version placed first on the disc.

**Katya Apekisheva** and **Charles Owen**, currently curating the London Piano Festival at Kings Place, first met as children in 1987. This, their first disc together, differs from its rivals in pairing *Petrushka* with *The Rite of Spring*. Their bright-sounding instrument is quite closely observed in a relatively small venue, a lifelike effect I found a little tiring. A conscientious effort is made to bring out orchestral colour through the piano writing alone, *Petrushka*'s percussive add-ons eschewed. Comprehensive notes and as many as 30 individual tracks make it possible to isolate particular nuggets for closer study. The interpretations steer an intelligent middle course between thrilling immediacy and somnambulistic reverie.

Notwithstanding the merits of these discs, it is something of a relief to turn to **Vladimir Jurowski**'s all-orchestral selection on LSO Live. Here, sympathetic engineering opens out the sound of a big band in a dry-throated hall and the players are on good form despite the challenge of recording in the course of demanding concert programmes. Applause has been suppressed throughout. Jurowski prefers the earlier, more profligate orchestrations of the *Symphonies of Winds* and *Petrushka*, eliciting eminently recommendable accounts of both. In his urgent and initially edgy take on the former he allows the players to shape detail and then makes the closing chorale suitably implacable. Like Russell Davies he can seem sluggish in *Petrushka* but is not so intent on clarifying its mushier glitter that he loses sight of the drama. The drum entr'actes linking the scenes seem to be partly offstage. At the Royal Festival Hall concert, mobile phones, noises off and rogue lighting risked compromising the frozen beauty of *Orpheus*. No evidence of these disturbances survives to mar another finely judged rendition. Robert Craft and the LSO, lither not cooler as captured in superior studio conditions (Naxos, 3/00), are only marginally preferable. **G**

### THE RECORDINGS



**Stravinsky** Petrushka Basel SO /  
Russell Davies, Namekawa  
Solo Musica **€** SOB11



**Stravinsky** Petrushka. Rite of Spring  
Apekisheva, Owen  
Quartz **€** QTZ2117



**Stravinsky** Petrushka, etc  
LPO / Jurowski  
LPO **€** LPO0091

unfolding unusual repertoire. Czech-American Jaromír Weinberger was something of a one-horse town, his opera *Schwanda the Bagpiper* being his single major hit, itself an outgrowth of Smetana and Dvořák. Anyone encountering the attractive *Overture to a Chivalrous Play* will hear the connection afresh. The works represented straddle the late Twenties and early Thirties. The *Six Bohemian Songs and Dances* subscribe to the Slavic musical pattern that Dvořák and Smetana had already exploited to such telling effect with their various orchestral dances and tone-poems, the sizeable opening *Andante rubato* an 8'30" violin rhapsody cast midway between Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* and Enescu in folk mode, beautifully played although, unless my eyes are deceiving me, the soloist – presumably the orchestra's concertmaster (at the time) Hans Maile – is not credited.

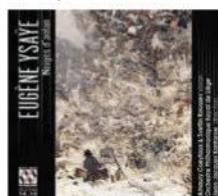
Having referred to Weinberger's Czech forebears I should also mention the German master Max Reger who, late in his all-too-brief life, served as the young composer's guide in composition and was an abiding influence, especially in terms of counterpoint. Anyone familiar with the Fugue from *Schwanda* will already know that, like Reger's fugues, it builds to a gargantuan climax. Similarly Weinberger's Passacaglia for organ and large orchestra included here is rich in Regerian allusions, especially the atmospheric passacaglia itself and the closing fugue.

As to the opening Intrada, Janáček springs more immediately to mind, specifically in the work's introduction. Good sound keeps Weinberger's often dense textures loud and clear and I'd say that anyone with a taste for the Romantic Czech masters, and for Reger as well of course, will be well catered for.

Rob Cowan

## Ysaÿe

Au rouet<sup>a</sup>. Berceuse, Op 20<sup>a</sup>. Chant d'hiver, Op 15<sup>a</sup>. Divertimento, Op 24<sup>b</sup>. Extase, Op 21<sup>b</sup>. Neiges d'antan, Op 23<sup>b</sup>. Rêve d'enfant, Op 14<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Amaury Coeytaux, <sup>b</sup>Svetlin Roussev vns  
 Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Jean-Jacques Kantorow  
 Musique en Wallonie  MEW1681 (70' • DDD)



The *poème*, wrote Eugène Ysaÿe, 'is free from all the restrictions imposed by the hallowed concerto form; it can be dramatic and lyrical, it is by nature romantic and impressionistic...it is, in a

word, a picture painted without a model'. I couldn't have come up with a better description of the three *poèmes* (he wrote seven in total) that form the backbone of this collection of Ysaÿe's shorter works for violin and orchestra.

The shape of all three is similar: an opening shrouded in Wagnerian gloom, the violin soaring free, the orchestra surging in response, a stormy climax about two thirds of the way in and an extended coda. They're all in a single movement and all about 10-15 minutes long (Ysaÿe's tendinitis may have been one reason for writing these shorter works, though apparently he played them relatively infrequently). The nostalgic *Neiges d'antan* and the slightly lighter, more dance-like *Divertimento* are *poèmes* in all but name, and if you love lush, overcast late Romanticism of the Franck or Chausson variety, this disc will be bliss. Sceptics might find Ysaÿe's ideas a bit samey: *chacun à son goût*.

Two solo violinists share the honours but there's no information about either of them in the glossy hardback booklet. Amaury Coeytaux has the slightly sweeter, more focused sound of the two, but they're both well-suited to Ysaÿe's quiet corners and soaring climaxes, and Svetlin Roussev's broad, rich tone is marvellously expressive in the opening sequence of *Extase*. Jeremy Nicholas praised Kantorow's Liège orchestra on an earlier Ysaÿe disc (10/14), and I'd second that: they're stylish and responsive, and the recorded sound is atmospheric. A worthwhile collection of some (still) fairly rare repertoire. Richard Bratby

## Brandenburg Celebrates'

**Brescianello** Chaconne. Violin Concerto, Op 1  
 No 4<sup>a</sup> **Geminiani** Concerto grosso after Corelli  
 No 12, 'La folia' **Handel** Zadok the Priest, HWV258<sup>b</sup>. Concerto grosso, Op 3 No 6 HWV317  
**Kats-Chernin** Prelude and Cube<sup>c</sup> **Telemann** Concerto for Flute and Violin, TWV52:e3<sup>d</sup>  
**Vivaldi** Cello Concerto, RV421<sup>e</sup>  
<sup>c</sup>Jane Sheldon sop <sup>d</sup>Melissa Farrow fl <sup>e</sup>Christina Leonard ssax ad <sup>f</sup>Shaun Lee-Chen vn <sup>g</sup>Jamie Hey vc  
<sup>b</sup>Brandenburg Choir; <sup>f</sup>Australian Brandenburg Orchestra / <sup>g</sup>Paul Dyer  
 ABC Classics  ABC481 1929 (67' • DDD)



It wouldn't do to allow one's imagination to stray too far over the cover artwork to this 25th-anniversary studio recording from the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, their black-tied artistic director Paul Dyer

confidently meeting the camera's gaze, posed in a Bond-esque power stance, unravelled bow tie rakishly framing undone top shirt buttons as he cradles a red explosion of a bouquet. So instead on to the contents, which are a cheerful party mix of Baroque allsorts, rounded off by the premiere recording of their anniversary concert commission for soprano and Baroque ensemble, *Prelude and Cube*, by the Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin. The whole is supported by equally chirpy entry-level booklet-notes (think 'What to listen for', etc).

Upbeat tone and brevity are the unifying factors of the Baroque quotient (all complete works), with not one hitting the 11-minute mark. Jamie Hey is the soloist for Vivaldi's pint-sized Cello Concerto in A minor, RV421, and while there are cleaner, lighter-weighted and more multi-hued Vivaldi RV421s out there, the orchestra's polished energy and evident *joie de vivre* make for a thoroughly gratifying listen, as they do with Telemann's Concerto in E minor for flute, violin and strings, TWV52:e3, with flautist Melissa Farrow and Baroque violinist Shaun Lee-Chen. Likewise, Handel's *Zadok the Priest*'s crisp perkiness is infectious. Sadly though, the enjoyment stopped with *Prelude and Cube*. In fact, it was sheer professional conscientiousness that kept me grimly hanging in for repeated replays of its 13-minute (13!) amalgam of Baroque, jazz and Philip Glass pastiches.

Charlotte Gardner

## 'English Fantasy'

**Dankworth** Clarinet Concerto, 'The Woolwich'  
**Hawes** Clarinet Concerto  
**Reade** The Victorian Kitchen Garden - Suite  
**Todd** Concerto for Emma  
**Emma Johnson** cl  
**BBC Concert Orchestra / Philip Ellis**  
 Nimbus Alliance  NI6328 (69' • DDD)



Here's an amiable disc exploring the light end of contemporary clarinet composition in works written especially for soloist Emma Johnson. This is music that doesn't make too many demands on the listener, yet is well crafted.

Will Todd's *Concerto for Emma* is impish and jazzy, with bluesy muted trumpet setting off the Ballad central movement. Johnson slips and slithers through the lively outer movements with a great sense of character. Also on the jazz spectrum is John Dankworth's Concerto, composed



Clarinetist Emma Johnson recording 'English Fantasy' with the BBC Concert Orchestra under the conductor Philip Ellis

for Johnson in 1995 and subtitled *The Woolwich* because it was Johnson's local building society that sponsored the commission! Dankworth's is a busy, cosmopolitan concerto, a magpie collection of differing styles and moods from its nostalgic slow movement to its catchy boogie-woogie finale.

Paul Reade's Suite from *The Victorian Kitchen Garden* will be familiar to many readers from its use in the 1990s BBC television programme. Johnson revels in these five charming miniatures, of which the closing number, 'Summer', has become a great favourite with young clarinet students, having been on the ABRSM Grade 5 list for several years.

The most substantial work on the disc – and the most musically nourishing too – is Patrick Hawes's Concerto, which exists thanks to Twitter. Hawes and Johnson 'met' online and the result is a fine new work. Johnson soars with ease in the gorgeous Sarabande, delicately scored and really rather haunting. The purposeful march for the finale ends with a sustained top C, pulled off with aplomb. **Mark Pullinger**

### Favourite English Strings'

**Bridge** Three Idylls – Allegro poco lento. Two Old English Songs **Britten** Variations on a

Theme of Frank Bridge, Op 10 **Elgar** Serenade for Strings, Op 20 **Finzi** Romance, Op 11 **Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra / Sakari Oramo**

Alba (F) ABCD387 (56' • DDD/DSD)



Sakari Oramo and the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra give us a finely disciplined *Frank Bridge Variations* of pungent character, fiery snap and arresting incident. It's a performance whose nervy, questing undertow satisfyingly brings out this astoundingly inventive piece's affinity with the more progressive European music of the time in much the same way that Bridge's own mature output does; indeed, both the 'Funeral March' (Var 8) and imploring threnody which emerges after that disarming chain of Bridge quotations in the 'Fugue and Finale' (Var 10) have a positively Bergian intensity about them. Ultimately, I do prefer the extra lustre, composure and unforced eloquence of, say, Andrew Davis's memorably perceptive BBC SO version (Warner Apex, 10/01) as well as Britten's own

(and, to my mind, still unrivalled) 1966 recording with the ECO (Decca, 1/87), but this sparky newcomer has plenty to say and is definitely worth experiencing.

The *Allegretto poco lento* waltz from the second of Bridge's *Three Idylls* of 1906 for string quartet that Britten borrowed for his 1937 masterwork crops up again (fleshed out for string orchestra) towards the end of the programme, and we also get ideally spry and glowing accounts of Bridge's radiant, entrancingly resourceful treatments of 'Sally in our alley' and 'Cherry ripe' that make up his *Two Old English Songs* from 1916 (played in reverse order on my finished copy). It's preceded here by uncommonly shapely and refreshingly mobile readings of Elgar's Serenade and Finzi's wistful Romance, which reveal once more Oramo's comprehensive understanding of this repertoire.

Boasting vivid sound and truthful balance, this Alba release certainly merits investigation. **Andrew Achenbach**

### 'Music at the Habsburg Court'

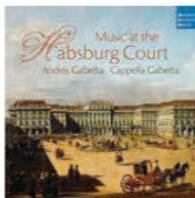
**Ragazzi** Sonatas, Op 1 – No 6; No 8 **Timmer**

Concerto for Violin, Strings and Continuo

**Umstatt** Concertos for Violin, Strings and

Continuo – No 5; No 6 **Vivaldi** Violin Concerto,

Op 9 No 5 RV358

Cappella Gabetta / Andrés Gabetta *vn*Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88875 19466-2  
(62' • DDD)

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Vienna's Habsburg Court was one of the foremost political and cultural centres in Europe. The reign of Emperor Charles VI (1711-40) in particular saw composers from all over Europe dedicating musical works to him in the hope of being admitted to the prestigious Hofkapelle, where they could enjoy a combination of prestige, high levels of musicianship and all-important financial security. Vivaldi himself appears to have made repeated attempts to be taken in, all of which failed.

Andrés Gabetta and Cappella Gabetta have presented a selection of these musical CVs, all violin concertos, and although someone should have taken a red pen to the PR-ish breathiness of some of the disc's presentational text (the early music specialists of Cappella Gabetta have apparently been 'handpicked', for instance, but as opposed to what exactly?) the recorded musical content itself is genuinely vibrant and arresting.

The concertos themselves are an interesting bunch; Vivaldi's first *La Cetra* A minor concerto, RV358, makes for a punchy start, after which we're into lesser-trodden but equally lively territory with two concertos each from Angelo Ragazzi and Joseph Umstatt, and a further concerto from Joseph Ferdinand Timmer (this latter a premiere recording). Lesser-spotted composers aside, though, this is just immensely feel-good stuff, helped by the fact that, with the exception of the searing Vivaldi opener, it's major keys all the way, with toe-tapping tunes and plenty of virtuoso showing off. Gabetta's playing itself is neat-fingered, lean-toned and full of nuance, supported by an ensemble clearly enjoying themselves in the gently sonorous surroundings of the nave in Guebwiller's Les Dominicains convent. All in all, great fun and beautifully played.

Charlotte Gardner

## ‘Polish Violin Concertos’

Bacewicz Violin Concerto No 1 Panufnik Violin Concerto<sup>a</sup> Spisak Andante and Allegro Tansman Five Pieces Piotr Plawner *vn* Berlin Chamber Symphony Orchestra / Jürgen Bruns Naxos © 8 573496 (56' • DDD)

<sup>a</sup>Recorded live at the Usedom Festival, Kaisersaal Hotel Maritim, Heringsdorf, October 3 & 4, 2014



It says something when the most familiar piece on a disc is Andrzej Panufnik's Violin Concerto. In fact these four works all deserve to be better-known; and that includes the Panufnik. Like everything here, it receives lively and committed advocacy from Piotr Plawner and the Kammerorchester Berlin under Jürgen Bruns; unlike everything else, it's up against formidable recorded competition, not least from an impassioned Alexander Sitkovetsky on CPO and the work's dedicatee Yehudi Menuhin, conducted by the composer. A case of the best being the enemy of the good.

But the first of Grażyna Bacewicz's seven violin concertos is less readily available, and if Plawner is a less glamorous proposition, tonally, than Joanna Kurkowicz on Chandos, I liked Bruns's brisk approach to Bacewicz's neoclassical forms; there's both wit and colour (listen to the way the bassoon bubbles quietly away at 0'40" in the finale). If only the orchestra could have been a little more forward. But that's a minor inconvenience in Alexandre Tansman's *Cinq Pièces*: a delicious little suite of pastiches and miniatures, written for Josef Szigeti and including a very Lyadov-like musical-box scherzo. It bustles, it sparkles; there's even a hint of a swing in the surprisingly funky *basso ostinato* finale.

And is this a premiere recording for Michał Spisak's *Andante and Allegro* for violin and strings? It doesn't say so, but it's nonetheless well worth having this nine-minute diptych from a former pupil of Bacewicz. Plawner is searching and expressive in the recitative-like opening *Andante* and the long orchestral diminuendo before the spiky *Allegro*, superbly controlled. Worth hearing for the Tansman and Spisak alone, though the Bacewicz and Panufnik would be honourable second choices in any collection.

Richard Bratby

Panufnik – selected comparisons:

Menuhin, Menuhin Fest Orch, Panufnik

(10/97) (WARN) 2564 67770-5 or 2564 67827-4

Sitkovetsky, Berlin Konzerthaus Orch

(11/14) (CPO) CPO777 687-2

Bacewicz – selected comparison:

Kurkowicz, Polish RSO, Borowicz

(4/09) (CHAN) CHAN10533

## IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

### • Harmonia Mundi News

The violinist **Isabelle Faust** (pictured) has joined forces with keyboard player **Kristian Bezuidenhout** to record Bach violin sonatas for the French label. The sessions took place at the Teldex Studio in Berlin, and the disc is provisionally scheduled for release in April next year. The same venue plays host to the **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin** this month: the Baroque group are recording a disc of Telemann's *Concerti per multi stromenti*, also due out in April 2017. In Stockholm's Berwaldhallen, meanwhile, **Daniel Harding** is recording Mahler's Ninth Symphony with the **Swedish Radio Orchestra**, set for release in autumn next year.



### • Pianists on Onyx

The Hungarian pianist **Dejan Lazić** is recording a programme of Liszt on Onyx this month, including transcriptions of music by Schubert, Verdi and Wagner. The disc is due out next April. **Shai Wosner** has recorded a mixed programme, focused on impromptus and improvisations, for the same label. It includes works by Chopin, Gershwin, Liszt, Dvořák, Ives and Schubert. The sessions took place in Atlanta in May, and the disc is due for release in March.

### • Dove premieres

July saw the **Sacconi Quartet** record two works by Jonathan Dove, both premiere recordings. They were joined by tenor **Mark Padmore** for the song-cycle *In Damascus*; while **Charles Owen** joined them to record the British composer's Piano Quintet. The sessions took place in All Saints, East Finchley in north London and the disc will be released on Signum.

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# Bach's Chaconne in D minor

**Kyung Wha Chung** discusses the transcendental solo violin masterpiece with Caroline Gill

I feel oddly emotional as I walk from the Tube to meet Kyung Wha Chung – it isn't often one finds oneself in the presence of one of the most respected artists of their age. Although subjective opinion on Chung is divided, she is without question a profoundly insightful musician; that we will be discussing the Chaconne from JS Bach's Solo Violin Partita in D minor feels particularly significant. When we meet she has nearly finished her recording of the Six Solo Sonatas and Partitas for Warner Classics, and is about to head back to St George's Hall in Bristol for the final refinements.

Such is Chung's familiarity with the Chaconne that it is almost predictable that she arrives for our meeting without a score, but I nevertheless feel a little small-minded when I pull out my contingency copy; it seems unnecessary when talking through even the nuts and bolts of a piece that Chung frequently refers to as 'spiritually elevated'. She does, however, immediately start flipping through the pages with a combination of enthusiasm and intense concentration.

The Chaconne, the final movement of the Second Partita, is on the surface simply one dance movement of the many that make up this extraordinary collection. But despite the individual ingenuity of every movement – be it fugue, study in polyphony, or structure that might fall most easily under the term 'theme and variations' – the Chaconne, more than any other, stands alone as a work of extraordinary inventiveness and is the one most frequently performed as a single piece.

*'You have to go to heaven in bar 133. I physically work relentlessly on it'*

'Unlike keyboard players, where unless you know the harmony you can't play the instrument, with the violin it is possible to learn only the notes,' says Chung. 'And you usually just learn the melodic line. Therefore, to hear this work in chord form, like a keyboard player, is something I was only taught by [Joseph] Szigeti in my early twenties.'

So when, years later, Chung injured her finger and stopped playing for a long period to teach at New York's Juilliard School, her instincts led her to return to it on the piano.

'And then I thought, my goodness: how clear it is on the keyboard, with that whole concept of long melodic lines against sustained vertical chords,' she says. 'You have to keep



'Spiritually elevated': Chung has been analysing the Chaconne since her twenties

the melodic line going but use the chords, and to do that you have to create an illusion around the cadences.'

This isn't a surprise, of course. If you look at the famous facsimile of the Chaconne – Anna Magdalena Bach's handwriting containing all 257 bars on a single page – you find wide expanses of the movement written in chord form, despite requiring realisation as repeated arpeggios or broken chords. This makes it clear that the movement is fundamentally as much vertical and harmonic as it is linear and melodic.

'A chaconne is the same as a passacaglia, in that it has a repeated, figured bass,' says Chung. 'Here, it's four bars, starting on the off-beat – the final beat of the preceding Sarabande is the up-beat into the Chaconne. But it's not just four bars, it's part of the form.' I am thrilled that she makes the high-minded assumption that there is simply a figured bass there, implied in the chordal structure, when in fact the notes on the page we're looking at are represented on a single stave of music. She laughs when I point this out – 'Of course! But it'd be easier if we had the Joachim edition [we're using the Urtext], because he letters it. And those letters usually come where the cadence is, so you can make a division: the first 16 bars is one whole line of the form – the first



The historical view

*Ernst Kurth*

*Grundlagen des Linearen Kontrapunkts; Bach's Melodische Polyphonie, 1922*  
*Analyses of works for unaccompanied violin*

'Bach's line never becomes bogged down in a feeble playing with harmonies...[he compensates for the chordal effects with] increasing melodic strength.'

*Joshua Bell*

*Washington Post magazine, April 8, 2007*

'The Chaconne is not just one of the greatest pieces of music ever written, but one of the greatest achievements of any man in history. It's a spiritually powerful piece, emotionally powerful, structurally perfect.'

*Johannes Brahms*

*Letter to Clara Schumann, October 15, 1868*

'On one stave...a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined I could have even conceived the piece, I am certain that the excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind.'

paragraph, so to speak. It's repeated on the same bass, going on and on. So you can create your own dynamic and texture.'

In all the manuscript versions of the Sonatas and Partitas, Bach is doggedly explicit: 'a violino solo *senza* [without] Basso accompagnato'. So there is a clear similarity between these unaccompanied works and Bach's accompanied sonatas, in the sense of the trio sonata form in both. But while the continuo is easy to follow in his accompanied music, here the listener has to pick it out of the single instrumental part – one of many traditional ideas that Bach subverts in the Chaconne. For the listener, the conundrum lies in understanding that you are receiving traditional musical ideas presented in an entirely revolutionary way. I wonder how one honours these elements while presenting a piece of music with spiritual meaning that transcends its earth-bound confines of form and structure?

Chung immediately flips through the pages to find bar 133, where the larger-scale triptych construction that arches over the pieces leaves its opening section in D minor, and enters a central section in D major by way of a harmonic shift that propels the music into a sudden sense of suspended animation.

'You have to go to heaven *here*,' says Chung, prodding at the double bar that contains the key change. 'This is the biggest challenge: bar 133. I physically work relentlessly on it, for the control of the bow, extension of the sound and the lightness. The challenge comes in that quietness and projection of the long line. But at the same time you have to hear the whole chord in your head, and it has to be infinitely suspended until somehow you reach a different dimension.'

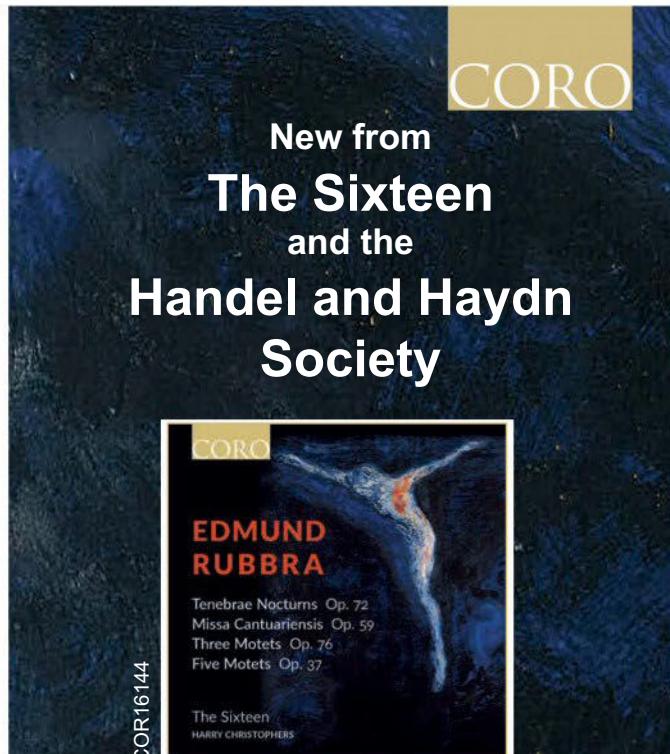
But then the 'return' of D minor at bar 209 isn't really that, because Bach changes the implied figured bass so fundamentally at this point; it is more as if he is starting again with the passacaglia variation theme. It's an exhausting onslaught when one's ears are straining to hear the unadulterated beauty of the melody while trying to comprehend what he is doing harmonically. 'But that is all incredibly freeing,' says Chung.

That sense of freedom is surely facilitated by the structure. By setting the repeating passacaglia against the overall three-part form, Bach allows the performer to concentrate on the elements that make it a fluid dance movement: a stately sarabande in all but name. But surely the complexity of the variations can make it hard to maintain a strong pulse throughout, despite the unchanging 3/4 of the time signature?

'It is difficult,' agrees Chung. 'I'd like the Chaconne to be choreographed for the ballet, but to be able to linger on each chord together, you'd need a close rapport with the dancer.'

Speaking of dancers, there is an extraordinary poise and grace to Chung as she sits opposite me. It is an aura that Stephen Johns, the disc's producer, is familiar with: 'There is an incredible energy and intensity with which she works...the results have an amazing combination of spontaneity and hard-won truth.' What he says resonates with the serenity of her unaccompanied Bach today, in contrast to her more romantic performances of the 1970s: it's impossible not to engage with the processes going on in her mind when watching her perform live.

Over the course of our discussion, Chung and I talk a great deal about the personal struggle that can lead to a deeper understanding of this work – her musical and spiritual open-mindedness is refreshing. When I leave, the emotion I felt on my arrival is combined with a buoyancy that comes from knowing my understanding of this masterpiece has been immeasurably deepened by one musician's powerful insight. **6** *Kyung Wha Chung's solo Bach recording will be reviewed next issue*



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# Chamber



Hannah Nepil on a disc of cello music by Rebecca Clarke:

*'Wallfisch embraces the opening's impetuosity and the impish humour of the Ravelian third movement'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



David Fanning listens to a new set of Schnittke's violin sonatas:

*'Throughout the three sonatas, Mints and Apekisheva are passionate and dedicated guides'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**

## Bartók · Lutosławski · Schnittke

**Bartók** Violin Sonata No 2, Sz76

**Lutosławski** Partita

**Schnittke** Violin Sonata No 2, 'Quasi una sonata'

**Miranda Cuckson** vn **Blair McMillen** pf

ECM New Series (2) 481 1788 (62' · DDD)



In her booklet-notes, violinist Miranda Cuckson claims a personal connection to this all-Slavic cocktail: ancestors of her Viennese grandfather apparently came from Slovakia. Tenuous? Somewhat, especially given that no Slovak or indeed Czech composer appears on the programme. Never mind. Cuckson and her stage-fellow Blair McMillen sound almost as though they had this music in their blood.

That's certainly true of Bartók's Second Violin Sonata, which showcases their vast colour palette. They manage to sound assertive but not unkempt, ponderous but not lugubrious, bringing plenty of dignity, in particular to the creeping opening. They smoothly negotiate the many technical hurdles, not least the pesky tempo shifts in the second movement. If only they managed it with the same easy charm and spontaneity of, say, James Ehnes. This doesn't quite sound like music created on the hoof.

Nor does Schnittke's Second Violin Sonata, whose key ingredient – humour – never quite surfaces. What we get instead is a sabre-toothed interpretation, which seems to take all the tongue-in-cheek conceits – long silences, heart-stopping crashes – in deadly earnest. More's the pity, because there is plenty to value here: energy, incisiveness and an ability to commit wholeheartedly to every note.

So it's just as well that Lutosławski's Partita puts those traits to better use. This, after all, is music of raw emotion, notwithstanding its debt to Baroque gesture. Cuckson and McMillen's playing acknowledges that debt, along with its meticulously considered structure. But

theirs, above all, is a propulsive, urgent, dizzyingly virtuoso performance, and one that leads to a climax of thrilling intensity.

**Hannah Nepil**

*Bartók – selected comparison:*

*Ehnes (3/12) (CHAN) CHAN10705*

## Beethoven

**Violin Sonatas** – No 2, Op 2 No 2; No 4, Op 23; No 9, 'Kreutzer', Op 47

**Lorenzo Gatto** vn **Julien Libeer** pf

Alpha (2) ALPHA240 (73' · DDD)



A note in the booklet by these Belgian artists – still in their twenties – says that their duo partnership has developed from the transformative experience of periodically coming together to give cycles of the Beethoven sonatas, reunions which have begun 'to structure our lives'. They offer this recording of three works 'as a snapshot rather than an absolute statement', conscious of regarding playing Beethoven as a lifetime's work. I like that and wasn't surprised to learn that the pianist, Julien Libeer, has been mentored by Maria João Pires.

He and Lorenzo Gatto cover the ground like thoroughbreds, with exemplary virtuosity. There are no big slow movements and many astonishingly quick ones where lightness predominates, allied to intensity. This is an intelligent selection and ordering, the *Kreutzer* Sonata placed first followed by the terse one in A minor, Op 23, whose *Presto* finale often seems close to what Beethoven was attempting with a freer treatment of the piano part in the first movement of the later piece. The earlier A major Sonata from Op 12, coming last here, sounds no less characteristic.

In sum, an alert and personable recital which I enjoyed a lot. The recorded balance is exactly right for duo sonatas which are driven by the pianist without an expectation that the violinist should sound at all subservient. There is some

momentary distortion of the picture at moments of sudden emphasis or changes of sonority – from pedalling perhaps, or undamped resonances of the stage flooring?

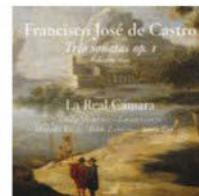
Gatto is not a shrinking violet but I did wish that his tone had more of a speaking quality, especially in the ornate variations of the second movement of the *Kreutzer*, with the contrasts of normal bowing and pizzicato in Var 4. A perplexed contemporary complained of the strangeness: 'We do not yet have anything that has stretched the limits of this genre so far and then has so truly occupied them.' I recall how every detail on the first LP recording of the *Kreutzer* I possessed, by David Oistrakh and Lev Oborin (Philips, 5/63), was made to register, even the accompanimental ones, with the violinist assuming throughout a role comparable to that of the soloist in a concerto. That was Beethoven's expressed intention, and it's not always realised here. **Stephen Plaistow**

## Castro

**Twelve Trio Sonatas**, 'Trattenimenti armonici da camera', Op 1

**La Real Cámara**

Glossa (2) GCD920314 (57' · DDD)



*Trattenimenti armonici da camera* (Bologna, 1695) was the first publication by Francisco José de Castro, an Andalusian Jesuit probably trained initially in Seville but whose musical education was finished in Brescia (in those days governed by the Republic of Venice). This first opus was dedicated to Count Gaetano Giovanelli, the Venetian nobleman who had sponsored Castro's membership of Brescia's Accademia dei Formati – a learned society interested not only in music but also in literature and philosophy.

Its 10 trio sonatas are constructed as suites of preludes and dances, and all are played superbly by La Real Cámara. Principal violinist Emilio Moreno – the co-founder of



Miranda Cuckson: a propulsive, urgent reading of Lutosławski's *Partita*

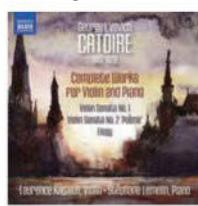
the Glossa label – calls Castro ‘The Spanish Corelli’, and that is borne out by the crystal-clear unfurling of lines played with impressive responsiveness and rhetorical persuasion by Moreno and Enrico Gatti (the collaboration of Spanish and Italian violinists seems apt). Cellist Mercedes Ruiz provides subtle counterpoint on the bowed bass-lines, and continuo realisations by the brothers Pablo (guitar/theorbo) and Aarón Zapico (harpsichord) range between full and lively in quick music and more sparsely restrained in the slow music.

The ninth sonata travels from a beautiful *adagio* Preludio to its gently playful concluding Minuet (which here has hints of Spanish dance on account of Pablo Zapico’s use of syncopated strumming guitar). Likewise, the Gavotte that concludes the third sonata is played with an infectious zest, and a unison Minuet in the first sonata suggests traces of the composer’s Andalusian roots. At the Corellian end of the scale, there is gracefulness in the central Allemanda in the 10th sonata, whereas the slow Preludio of the seventh sonata has melancholic tension between delicious dissonances and cathartic resolutions. If this whets anyone’s appetite for more Castro, they will be

disappointed – although a few more opuses were published, most are lost. **David Vickers**

### Catoire

‘Complete Works for Violin and Piano’  
Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 15; No 2, ‘Poème’,  
Op 20. Elegy, Op 26  
**Laurence Kayaleh** *vn* **Stéphane Lemelin** *pf*  
Naxos (M) 8 573345 (53’ • DDD)



A lightning-flash of piano semiquavers, the violin pulls itself defiantly up to its full height, and Georgy Catoire’s First Violin Sonata is in business. Catoire is a minor figure in Silver Age Russian Romanticism but his music has a big personality. Tchaikovsky recognised that – he asked the student Catoire to send him everything he wrote, telling him that ‘I am in sympathy with you, both as artist and man’. This is music of the Western-facing Moscow school; think supercharged Arensky.

Large-scale music, then, and Laurence Kayaleh and Stéphane Lemelin give it large-scale performances. That’s all very well up

to a point; they’re both powerful players and the music often suits a red-blooded approach (listen to *Kayaleh* from 6’19” in the Second Sonata to hear her low register in all its gutsy glory). They’re at their best in Catoire’s grand, cascading climaxes.

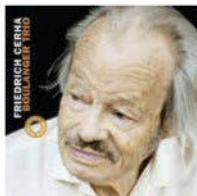
But they could have gone deeper, and too often I felt bludgeoned instead of beguiled. Compared with Laurent Breuninger and Anna Zassimova on CPO, the opening of the First Sonata’s Barcarolle is stiff, the finale lacking in humour. Moments that call for inwardness or poetry just sweep past; nor does the extended arc of the single-movement Second Sonata quite hang together.

That’s exacerbated by a slightly metallic-sounding piano and a recorded sound that makes the piano remote when it should be intimate, and that at other times allows bass figuration to swirl up in a great muddy, detail-obscuring flood. With barely 53 minutes of music (Catoire didn’t write much for violin and piano but CPO at least adds a transcription of a viola piece), there are probably better ways to get to know this rewarding composer. **Richard Bratby**

*Violin Sonatas – selected comparison:*  
Breuninger, Zassimova (CPO) CPO777 378-2

**Cerha**

Five Movements<sup>a</sup>. Rhapsody<sup>b</sup>. Three Pieces<sup>c</sup>.  
Six Inventions<sup>d</sup>. Piano Trio - Nachtstück<sup>a</sup>  
•Boulanger Trio (b) Birgit Erz vn (c) Ilona Kindt vc  
b) Karla Haltenwanger pf  
AVI-Music (c) AVI8553347 (59' • DDD)



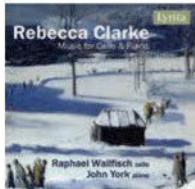
Through his early studies with Josef Polnauer, a member of the Schoenberg circle, Friedrich Cerha is one of the few remaining descendants of the Second Viennese School. However, while this collection of chamber works does indeed, in terms of its motivic-developmental style and use of somewhat unfashionable forms, hearken back to the early 20th century, the composer who most often comes to mind is in fact Bartók.

As with the Hungarian master, Cerha's chamber music often alternates between lyrical modality and dense chromaticism. In the Five Movements for piano trio (2006-07), Cerha even uses an 'arch' form adumbrated in the form and title ('Parabola') of the first movement. This piano trio, spritely and elegant, is the meatiest work on the disc and rewards repeated listens. Up until 2005 Cerha had never written a piano trio but his attitude to the instrumental formation softened, he says, when a piece was requested from him to mark the retirement of Bálint András Varga. From that first piano trio we have here the 'Nachtstück' (2005), in which slow, lyrical cello and violin lines discourse with delicate piano chords – a night music, again, more Bartók than Mahler.

Aside from these two trios, and despite excellent performances, the disc is disappointing. The Rhapsody for violin and piano (2001), commissioned for the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud competition, is a virtuoso showcase in an atonal idiom whose *salzando* passagework and double-stopped harmonics amount to little. The Six Inventions for violin and cello (2005-06) are, likewise, for the most part vociferous, their incessantly toiling counterpoint not generating much interest for the listener, apart from the third invention, a supple duo comprised solely of harmonics. **Liam Cagney**

**Clarke**

Clarke Cello (Viola) Sonata. Epilogue. I'll bid my heart be still. Passacaglia. Rhapsody  
York Dialogue with Rebecca Clarke  
Raphael Wallfisch vc John York pf  
Lyrata (c) SRCD354 (68' • DDD)



Perhaps Rebecca Clarke's time is finally approaching. It is only a few months since

the Italian viola player Diana Bonatesta and her pianist sister Arianna released their portrait of this too little-heard 20th-century composer (Aevea, 5/16). And this new release from cellist Raphael Wallfisch and pianist John York makes another fairly persuasive case for her music.

I say 'fairly' because cultivating a truly unique style is probably not what Clarke will be remembered for. There are moments in these chamber works which leave us wondering if we really need another Debussy, Ravel, Vaughan Williams, Holst. But what she did, she did extremely well, resulting in tautly structured music full of ardour and complexity.

All of which interact compellingly in the Sonata for viola and piano, played here in the composer's own cello version. It was this piece that almost won Clarke the 1919 Berkshire (USA) Chamber Music Prize. And it might have done so, had the critics been less appalled by the idea that a woman, of all things, could out-write Ernest Bloch, the eventual winner. More fool them, Wallfisch seems to be saying, by playing it with such vindictive zest. He embraces the opening's impetuosity and the impish humour of the Ravelian third movement. But what serves him best of all is his full-bodied tone which, together with York's delicate pianism, locks into the music's poignancy.

It pays off, too, in the Rhapsody, an even more complex, deeply felt statement than the Sonata. Indeed, Wallfisch and York are in their element when negotiating the second movement, the work's emotional epicentre, which starts with a low growl, then grows into something of nightmarish intensity. But there are many perks here besides: the urgency they bring to the opening or the grace with which they handle the third movement's cross-rhythms.

Even to the smaller works – Epilogue, Passacaglia and 'I'll bid my heart be still' – they bring a weight that demonstrates total commitment to Clarke's cause. And, just to underline the point, York has filled out the disc with one of his own compositions. *Dialogue with Rebecca Clarke* is not a masterpiece, more a jigsaw of themes and harmonies from Clarke's Viola Sonata, mingled with some Clarke-inspired gestures from York. But it's an affectionate, touching homage nonetheless. **Hannah Nepil**

**Dvořák**

Piano Trios - No 3, Op 65 B130;  
No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B166  
Busch Trio  
Alpha (c) ALPHA238 (77' • DDD)



Naming your new trio after one of the greatest chamber ensembles of the 20th century certainly suggests noble aspirations, and yet even after the modest passage of four years the youthful Busch Trio can boast one of the most notable features of their namesake: a pooled decision to put the music, and only the music, first.

For example, specifically the opening of the *Dumky* Trio's second movement, when the key suddenly changes at around 0'34" the Busch let the music do the talking whereas the Florestans mark the moment with some subtle but in my view unnecessary punctuation – and that's without mentioning Omri Epstein's perfectly weighted, quietly chiming chords and cellist Ori Epstein's expressive line on the new Alpha disc. The Busch also hold the tension and when, further along the line, the dumka's high spirits kick in (*vivace non troppo*), violinist Mathieu van Bellen retains the quiet dynamic while Epstein plays a hopping staccato. All is as it should be, the following *Andante* letting in the sunlight, the approach like a series of narrative tone-poems, which is fairly close to Dvořák's original intentions.

The Third Trio, Op 65, is the real 'biggie' in terms of scale and tension, and while there are other versions that push for more in the way of dynamism (the Beaux Arts, Isabelle Faust et al, the Suk Trio, etc), the Busch score handsomely for fine ensemble work and an obvious rapport between the players. Just one mannerism bothered me, the pianist's halting emphasis at fig A (0'36") in the finale, which rather disrupts the flow; maybe just one 'breath' would have sufficed, but to keep repeating it is distracting.

Viewed overall these are very fine performances, the two string players perfectly matched, with articulate piano playing that never exceeds the limits of propriety. **Rob Cowan**

*Selected comparison:*

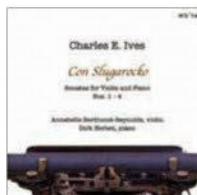
*Florestan Trio* (1/97) (HYPE) CDA67572, CDA66895 (oas)

**Ives**

'Con Slugarock'  
Violin Sonatas - No 1; No 2; No 3; No 4  
Annabelle Berthomé-Reynolds vn Dirk Herten pf  
White (c) 2016 (79' • DDD)



The Busch Trio offer Dvořák's passionate Third and genial Dumky piano trios



The four violin sonatas that Charles Ives assembled between 1902 and 1915 have never been big hitters in the same league as his *Concord* Sonata or the perpetually undervalued First Piano Sonata. Ives wrote a selection of individual movements for violin and piano which were then grouped into four three-movement structures. If you're not careful, the four sonatas, when played back to back, can sound like a rambling digression threaded together with interchangeable material. And Annabelle Berthomé-Reynolds and Dirk Herten needed to be more careful.

Their cause is not helped by a tinny, lifeless sound environment that too often allows the violin to be swamped by the piano (the suspicion that things were done on a shoestring is heightened by the lack of booklet-notes). There are at least three outstanding existing sets in the catalogue, ranging from Hilary Hahn and Valentina Lisitsa's set – consistently charming, if occasionally tipping towards raw sentiment – to the steely control of Gregory

Fulkerson and Robert Shannon. Curt Thompson and Rodney Waters pitch their tent somewhere in the interpretative middle; and in this elevated company Berthomé-Reynolds and Herten can be no one's idea of good enough.

The opening *Adagio* of the Third Sonata encapsulates many of the prevailing problems. Berthomé-Reynolds's tone is oddly monotonous while rhythms are stilted, without even a hint of Ivesian concertinaed flexibility. Where the likes of Hahn and Fulkerson sing through the opening line, Berthomé-Reynolds mumbles a sequence of disjointed phrases – a sudden leap in register equating to an abrupt gear change. To add to the charge sheet is an overly homogenised palette, which might indeed fool you into thinking that Ives's material is interchangeable. But it doesn't have to be like this – Curt Thompson's lightness of touch during the Fourth Sonata, with supple changes of colour as the material shifts focus, speaks more of a painterly sense of inner motion and narrative perspective. **Philip Clark**

*Selected comparisons:*

*Thompson, Waters (9/04) (NAXO) 8 559119*  
*Hahn, Lisitsa (11/11) (DG) 477 9435GH*  
*Fulkerson, Shannon (BRID) BCD9024*

## Legrenzi

*'Sonate e Balletti'*

*Sonate, libro primo, Op 2 – La Cornara; La Foscari; La Frangipana; La Zabarella. Sonate da chiesa e da camera, Op 4 – Alemanda terza, 'La Piloni'; Balletto quarto; Corrente terza; La Forni; La Pezzoli; Sarabanda prima. Sonate, libro terzo, Op 8 – La Basadonna; La Cremona; La Marinona; L'Obizza; La Squarzona. La cetra, Op 10 – Sonata prima; Sonata seconda; Sonata terza; Sonata quarta; Sonata sesta. Balletti e correnti, Op 16 – Balletto primo; Balletto secondo; Corrente terza; Corrente nona (Ciaconna)*

*Clematis*

Ricercar ® RIC356 (78' • DDD)



Like so many 17th-century Italian musicians, Giovanni Legrenzi led a peripatetic life. Following a conventional enough start to his career in Italy, a brief period was spent at Versailles before moving to Venice; there he passed the last five years of his life as *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's Basilica, still one of the most prestigious musical institutions in Italy in



The Rautio Trio in Mozart: 'performances notable for their buoyancy and vivacity'

the years immediately following the death of Francesco Cavalli.

It was also in Venice that most of his music was published, and it is from the four volumes of sonatas that form the core of his writing for instruments that most of the works on this recording are taken. In purely structural terms, Legrenzi's instrumental sonatas follow the traditions established by earlier generations of Italian composers. Each consists of four or five movements, with the slow ones often being purely functional, to facilitate transition rather than establishing a contrasting mood. By way of contrast, Clematis have included a number of pieces from the Op 16 *Balletti e correnti*, dance types that were to feed into the fully fledged *sonata da camera*.

All are essentially designed for performance by strings, and Clematis have sensibly decided to vary the overall sound by imaginatively scoring the continuo lines for a wide range of supporting instruments including theorbo, guitar, positive organ and harpsichord. This welcome variety increases the almost kaleidoscopic shifting of focus, for all these works are short. Legrenzi's real gifts lie in writing catchy tunes, the adroit

manipulation of short motifs and attractive quasi-fugato writing. Clematis have responded with carefully thought-out phrasing, a well-balanced control of ensemble and a sensitive feel for style; the result, recorded in two different locations to good acoustic effect, makes for attractive listening. **Iain Fenlon**

## Mozart

Piano Trios - K502; K542; K564

Rautio Piano Trio

Resonus (RES10168 (57' • DDD)



Mozart's piano trios don't come out to play as often as Haydn's, despite being among his finest chamber works. (Similarly neglected are the string quintets, not counting the G minor, K516.) So a new recording of any or all of them is always to be welcomed. This disc adds interest by being performed on period instruments, making it something of a rarity in this repertoire.

The ear is immediately struck by the fortepiano, a 1987 Derek Adlam copy of an

Anton Walter instrument from the mid-1790s, which formerly belonged to Christopher Hogwood. It's beautifully set up, and remarkably little action-noise is captured in the Potton Hall recording. As delightful as it is to listen too, it is evidently a joy to play, and Jan Rautio leads performances notable for their buoyancy and vivacity.

I know from experience that piano trios are notoriously difficult to record and, much as the Rautio players extol the balance advantages of period instruments, this seems to be a problem that has not been entirely overcome. Cellist Adi Tal offers elegant support to the piano's left-hand lines but Jane Gordon's violin often dominates. (Neither string instrument is identified in the booklet.) Hers is a full-bodied sound, only occasionally warmed by vibrato, but can become oppressive as sustained notes reach the middle of the bow. Not only that, but Gordon fights shy of exploiting a true *piano*, meaning that quiet passages are rendered less tenderly than they might have been. The piano in many places is all but swamped by the string tone – which is a pity, as I liked the piano the best.

**David Threasher**



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## Mozart the master of marketing!

In January 1783 Mozart advertised in the *Wiener Zeitung* 'the publication of three new, recently completed piano concertos', which could even be played with quartet accompaniment – thus enabling him to reach a wider public. In similar vein, he told his father that they were 'very brilliant and pleasing to the ear . . . Here and there only connoisseurs will derive satisfaction from them – yet in such a way that the non-connoisseur will also be pleased, without knowing why.' It's a fair bet that these dazzling performances by Kristian Bezuidenhout and the Freiburger Barockorchester will meet with the same unanimous approval!

**Reich**

Double Sextet. Radio Rewrite

Ensemble Signal / Brad Lubman

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7671 (40' • DDD)

**Reich**

Sextet. Clapping Music.

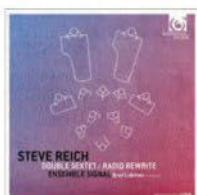
Music for Pieces of Wood

LSO Percussion Ensemble

LSO Live (M) LSO5073 (43' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

October 30, 2015



Steve Reich will be 80 this year – a landmark date that will no doubt encourage some to reflect on an extraordinarily consistent body of music spanning over 50 years, where each composition is seen to build and develop on a fully formed stylistic language and clear musical vision. Generalisations only speak half-truths, of course, and while it is possible to trace a largely continuous line through Reich's oeuvre, the differences that appear from one 'phase' to the next are sometimes more revealing.

Two recent recordings show up some of these differences. Ensemble Signal under Brad Lubman focus on two recent chamber works: the energetic, engaging *Double Sextet* (2007) and darker, more reserved *Radio Rewrite* (2012). While both pieces build on Reich's interest in combining multiples of the same (or similar) instruments, they also dispense with the regular 12-beat rhythmic grid that forms the foundation for so many of the composer's earlier works. In fact, *Double Sextet* starts with a 22-beat pattern based on 6+4+5+7, while *Radio Rewrite* uses even more irregular groupings in its opening movement. Such unpredictable patterns not only force the listener out of his or her comfort zone but also demand supreme focus and concentration from each performer.

Ensemble Signal's playing in *Double Sextet* is so crisp and precise that it's easy to forget its rhythmic and contrapuntal complexities. At the same time the harmony's slightly gritty qualities are preserved, and just the right amount of articulation given to the sustained pitches and chords, which quite literally bind each section together. Their performance of *Radio Rewrite* makes a little more of the contrasts between the work's five sections than Alan Pierson and Alarm Will Sound's

excellent recording (Nonesuch, 12/14), with rhythms punched out nervously at the beginning and more weight and emphasis added to the central movement, where the work's indebtedness to the rock band Radiohead (from whose songs it quotes) is at its most obvious.

Like Signal, the LSO are by no means newcomers, and here their percussion ensemble casts its net further back to the more percussion-heavy and rhythmically steady-state Reich of the 1970s. Pairing together *Clapping Music* (1972) and *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973) certainly makes sense as the latter quotes from the former's rhythmic pattern. More similarities than differences lie between these works, for sure. *Pieces of Wood* is given an excellent rendition on this live recording, as if the precise mechanism of a complex clock had been carefully deconstructed before being pieced back together. The LSO percussion's performance of *Sextet* (1985) also builds up in energy and momentum to a quite thrilling climax; but, perhaps inevitably for music that demands such high levels of precision and accuracy, a few anomalies appear during the rhythmic transitions of the first movement. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

**Schnittke**

Violin Sonatas - No 1; No 2, 'Quasi una sonata';

No 3. *Gratulationsrondo. Polka. Stille Nacht.*Suite in Old Style<sup>a</sup>Roman Mints vn<sup>a</sup>va d'amore Katya Apeksheva pfOlga Martynova hpd<sup>a</sup> Andrey Doynikov,

Dmitri Vlassik perc

Quartz (B) ② QTZ2116 (89' • DDD)



In the booklet Roman Mints writes of a pre-first sonata of Schnittke that he decided not to record because it is 'not very successful'. It's hard not to regret this omission, since otherwise all the works on these new discs (with the possible exception of the two-minute *Polka*) have previously been recorded. There would clearly have been more than enough room for such a piece, as there would have been for Schnittke's *A Paganini* for violin solo and the *Prelude in memoriam Dmitry Shostakovich* in the version for violin and tape.

On the other hand, an almost unique selling point is the arrangement of the *Suite in Olden Style* for viola d'amore, harpsichord and percussion, made under Schnittke's supervision by violist Igor Boguslavsky (I dimly remember a previous version on the Consonance label but that never actually came my way). There's a

high risk of gimmickry here, but in fact the sound world Boguslavsky creates feels entirely Schnittkean and I found myself listening to this cheeky *faux naïf* concoction with fresh ears.

Throughout the three sonatas, Mints and Katya Apeksheva are passionate and dedicated guides to Schnittke's expressive landscapes as they evolve from late-Shostakovian grimaces to polystylistic melanges of neo-Baroque stylisation and Polish-school aleatory. For my money these new accounts are as rewarding as – and perhaps even a touch more communicative than – those of Joanna Kurkowicz and Sergey Schepkin on Bridge. Even so, for the bleak-on-bleak *Sonata No 3*, a typically painful yet inscrutable product of Schnittke's last period, I do find Daniel Hope and Simon Mulligan a touch more exploratory still: more tonally varied and more in touch with the music's dark soul. A qualified recommendation then, for what is undoubtedly a well-recorded and scrupulously prepared pair of discs.

**David Fanning***Sonatas No 1, 2, Suite in Old Style – selected comparison:*

Kurkowicz, Schepkin (BRID) BRIDGE9104

*Sonata No 3, Stille Nacht – selected comparison:*

Hope, Mulligan (4/00) (NIMB) NI5631

**Schoenberg**

'Insights - The String Quartets'

String Quartets - No 1, Op 7; No 2, Op 10<sup>a</sup>;

No 3, Op 30; No 4, Op 37

Asasello Quartet with <sup>a</sup>Eva Resch sop

Genuin (F) ② GEN16429 (143' • DDD)



The Cologne-based Asasello Quartet have programmed Arnold Schoenberg's four string quartets in reverse order, a journey from the natty arithmetic of String Quartet No 4 (1936) towards the protean harmonic aerobics of String Quartet No 1 in D minor (1904-5). And I spot a trend. Arriving just a couple of months after Quatuor Diotima released their own box-set of the complete Schoenberg, Webern and Berg quartets, this is heartening – another group in the first flush of youth are prepared to defy the prevailing narrative about Schoenberg representing crusty academic modernism and, instead, make a powerful case that his music has everything to offer both head and heart.

Quatuor Diotima pursued a canny middle course between Schoenberg as a modernist and as a composer earthed in late Romanticism. The Asasello Quartet generally enunciate with a drier tone and



The Asasello Quartet are joined by Eva Resch in Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, recorded as part of a complete survey of the composer's quartets

view even the First String Quartet as Schoenberg attempting to reach beyond the high Romanticism of *Verklärte Nacht* – the divorce from tonality secured in String Quartet No 2 (1907–08), the jittery night terror typical of *Pierrot lunaire* even, is already present in embryo in their perspective on this early score. As the booklet-notes explain, the Asasellos have modelled themselves consciously around the aesthetic of the LaSalle Quartet, and their indebtedness is clear.

The spider's web of counterpoint that characterises the Third Quartet's opening movement accrues with such apparent spontaneity that you might believe the music is creating itself in the moment. This is a carefully staged illusion, though: Schoenberg's assiduously tiered dynamics and dovetailed phrases have all been observed to the letter. If the form of the Third Quartet tumbles into itself, the First explodes outwards and the Asasello Quartet's performance meets the immensity of Schoenberg's vision head on. Its 50-minute one-movement structure bends gymnastically around harmonic landmarks, and the Asasellos don't hold back on the dramatic tension between harmonic instability and windows of still repose.

Their String Quartet No 2 penetrates deep into the poetic core of Schoenberg's score: the wistful nostalgia of the opening movement bumping into the schizophrenic hysteria of the second – a resolution of sorts found only as the music heads for the foothills of uncertain atonality, a transition that throaty soprano Eva Resch handles with due harmonic diligence. String Quartet No 4 – generally the most problematic of the set – again benefits from the Asasello's fastidious attention to detail of dynamic and articulation which helps keep Schoenberg's boxy rhythmic contours alive.

No one who finds themselves in a whirl over Second Viennese School music should be without the Quatuor Diotima's new box; but definitely it's worth budgeting for the Asasello Quartet too. The recorded sound is fulgent and graphic, although for some tastes Teemu Myöhänen's cello might be placed too prominently in the mix. But what playing! **Philip Clark**

*String Quartets – selected comparison:  
Diotima Qt (6/16) (NAIV) V5380*

### Shostakovich

*Piano Trios<sup>a</sup> – No 1, Op 8; No 2, Op 67.*

*Viola Sonata, Op 147<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>a</sup>**Zsolt-Tihámér Visontay** vn <sup>b</sup>**Ada Meinich** va

**Mats Lidström** vc **Vladimir Ashkenazy** pf  
Decca © 478 9382DH (72' • DDD)



It is becoming ever more routine to couple both Shostakovich piano trios together, and with the half-hour Viola Sonata and a star pianist involved throughout this new disc is certainly eye-catching. As to whether it equally catches the ear, the verdict has to be mixed.

The single-movement First Trio shows the teenage Shostakovich trying his hand for the first time at a full-scale sonata form, and doing so with a mixture of ingenuity, mischief and awkwardness that is never less than engaging. Mindful, perhaps, that the piece was written with his first sweetheart in mind, Ashkenazy and his colleagues bring out its lyrical qualities to the full, with no shortage of momentum where required.

The Second Trio has had numerous recordings but few, if any, that match up to the two featuring the composer himself, at least for structural and dramatic power (there are, of course, plenty that are cleaner and better recorded). This new

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Making a good noise: La Pifarescha play 16th-century music of war and peace

one is not entirely sure of itself in the tricky large-scale *accelerandos* that underpin the outer movements, and while the Scherzo is done with both panache and control, I would not always want to hear the slow movement so self-indulgent and lachrymose. The finale certainly has a fine long line. But at the high-point (from around 6'30"), which is also the climax to which the entire work has been aiming, the strings play un-muted; and while Visontay and Lidström are not the only ones to do so, they have the composer against them, not only in the score but on both of his recordings and in his practice in other works (try the Waltz from the String Quartet No 2, composed at almost exactly the same time), where it's clear that the strain of playing as loud as possible but muted was precisely the expressive effect he had in mind.

In the Viola Sonata Ashkenazy and Ada Meinich certainly bring verve and pungency to the central Scherzo, even if Meinich isn't the most commanding in some of the flourishes. But their straightforwardness misses by a mile the dramatic tension that can make the spectral outer movements uniquely compelling, even horrifying. Recording quality is on the dry side throughout, and at times Ashkenazy's piano sounds curiously choked and lacking in brightness. **David Fanning**

#### *Piano Trio No 2 – selected comparisons:*

*Shostakovich, Tsiganov, Shirinsky, r1945 (REVE) RV70007*  
*Shostakovich, Oistrakh, Sádlo, r1947 (REVE) RV70006*

#### **'Di guerra e di pace'**

'Renaissance Music for Winds and Percussion'  
**Ambrosio Amoroso** **Anonymous** **Allemande.**  
**Basse dance I.** **O partita crudele.** **Symphonia nobili sirene.** **Die votten Brüderen d'Estrées** **Les Bouffons Isaac** **La Morra Josquin** **Adieu mes amours.** **Mille regretz.** **Scaramella Kugelmann**  
**Nichts werders ist Moritz von Hessen-Kassel**  
**Two Pastorellas.** **Pavana del povero soldato**  
**Phalèse Pavane de la guerre.** **Gaillarde de la guerre.** **Pavana Ferrareze.** **Gaillarde Ferrareze**  
**Senfl** **Im Maien hört man die Hamen kreen.**  
**Patienta, muss ich han, wohl kann Susato** **Entrée du fol.** **Mille regretz Tabourot** **Belle qui tiens ma vie Willaert Vecchie letrose**  
**La Pifarescha**

*Glossa* **€** GCD923901 (55' • DDD)



This engaging recital focuses on music from the first half of the 16th century known to have been performed by 'high' (loud) instruments, that is, brass and the louder winds. La Pifarescha are not to be confused with the similarly named Pifarre, even though their make-up is broadly similar.

They make a good noise, both in quality and (where appropriate) in quantity: Senfl's *In Maien* has a lusty vigour, the din of assembled sackbuts, shawms and bagpipes complemented by the latter's daredevil ornamentation; straight after, Isaac's *La Morra* gets a sensitive reading on the softer winds and fiddles. The programme mixes secular vocal and dance music, both of them obvious repertoires within which to choose.

Too obvious, perhaps? For one thing, there's no lack of reports of contemporary wind ensembles of this period across Europe performing sacred music on their own, to the point of adding voices to an existing motet for the sake of added sonority. A selection of these would hardly have been out of place, given the recital's title. That brings me to a related point, which will strike anyone who scans the track-list: it might as well have been called 'Renaissance Greatest Hits', all but a handful of pieces having been recorded nearly endlessly down the decades, in anthologies very like this one. Nothing wrong with that, perhaps, except that there's little novelty of approach in these otherwise enjoyable interpretations. In this age when record labels seem to insist on a 'USP' for all but the most standard repertory, this seems a curious throwback. **Fabrice Fitch**

# George Guest

Geraint Lewis on the legendary Cambridge choirmaster and organist who spent 40 years presiding at St John's College and whose legacy lives on in his choir, pupils and recordings

Attending a service in St John's College Chapel the other day, I opened a pristine Book of Common Prayer and found that it had been presented by Mrs Nan Guest in memory of her husband Dr George Guest, organist and choirmaster from 1951 to 1991. I soon saw that every stall had a similar volume and reflected that this was such an apposite way of celebrating Guest's towering contribution to British church music and to that of St John's in particular. He always emphasised that words, in this context, had priority over music and that every performance had to find the meaning of the text, as translated into music, before it could hope to communicate. This belief was partly the result of his profound, yet lightly worn religious faith, but also a reflection of his proudly held Welsh ancestry, in which poetry was as much a part of the soul as music. The other notable point is enshrined in those very dates 1951-1991: 40 years in the same post. He himself said that this either reflected an utter lack of ambition or an equal sense of satisfaction. His predecessor Professor Robin Orr would say in 1991, 'I don't know how anyone can get stuck into 40 years of playing the psalms. It would have driven me up the wall!' But then, Orr was primarily a composer, whereas for Guest the psalms stood as a fixed point in a turning world, and his choir's daily interpretation of them would inspire many – whether religious or not – to attend services just to hear the unique sensitivity of the psalm-singing. The other factor which Guest recognised was that the building of a choir's unique style and continuity was

*Guest recognised that the building of a choir's unique style and continuity was nothing less than a lifetime's work*

nothing less than a lifetime's work and in this sense he established a distinctive tradition which lives on powerfully, nearly 14 years after his death in 2002.

Guest was born in Bangor, North Wales in 1924, where he was a member of the tiny cathedral choir. When, aged 11, the family moved east to Chester he simultaneously went up in the choral world, relishing the richer repertoire under Malcolm Boyle and also taking organ lessons. World War II interrupted his higher education, but in applying for the St John's

College Organ Scholarship in 1947 he was pleasantly surprised to be appointed. He found himself in an inspiring environment but one also recovering from the depredations of war. St John's had been run in the interim by Herbert Howells, and King's by Harold Darke, and there was change in the air. Guest was inspired not only by his teacher Robin Orr but also by the

return of Boris Ord at King's, whose mesmeric approach to conducting left an indelible impression. When the Scottish-born Orr left for Glasgow in 1956, Guest was ready in the wings at St John's, determined to ensure that his choir could equal, even surpass, the better-known 'choir down the road'!

It could well be argued that the development which transformed the choral landscape in the mid-1950s was the advent of recording and broadcasting. Guest was quick to identify the sound which David Willcocks now established at King's – cool, polished and ideally suited to its resonant medieval chapel. Accordingly, he would find the sound inherent in Sir George Gilbert Scott's new Gothic chapel for St John's of 1869 – clear, rich and powerful. This

## DEFINING MOMENTS

### • 1958 – First commercial recording for Argo

An exclusive contract with Britain's leading choral label was a notable coup and led to a distinguished legacy lasting nearly 25 years, most of which has subsequently been transferred to CD

### • 1961 – Conducts Tippett for St John's College anniversary

To mark the 450th anniversary of the college's foundation, major new works were commissioned – of which Tippett's *Evening Canticles* became a landmark of post-war church music

### • 1968 – First overseas tour to the Netherlands

With a visit to Amsterdam, a tradition was established of ambitious tours which encompassed four continents and most major capitals culminating with Hong Kong in 1991

### • 1972 – First broadcast of Ash Wednesday Evensong

Having started to broadcast in the mid-1950s, the Ash Wednesday Evensong with its haunting Allegri *Miserere* became an annual fixture on Radio 3 from 1972, with the popular Advent Carol Service following suit in 1981

### • 1974 – Makes first UK recording of Duruflé's *Requiem*

Given his love of the modern French repertoire, Guest was delighted that Duruflé wrote to say that he 'greatly appreciated the qualities of execution, of interpretation and of the sound itself' in Guest's groundbreaking recording

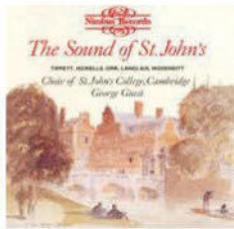
### • 1991 – Retirement concert at Ely Cathedral

To mark the end of a 40-year reign, the vast spaces of Ely Cathedral were packed to the rafters to hear St John's, joined by the choirs of King's, St Paul's and Winchester, all under former pupils of Guest's: Stephen Cleobury, John Scott and David Hill



contrast fed the establishing of the distinctive 'St John's sound' which ensured that the earliest recordings have never been out of the catalogue. This, in itself, followed the 'continental' timbre pioneered at Westminster Cathedral by George Malcolm but was subtly adapted for the mainstream Anglican repertoire. The discography which Guest set down with labels including Decca's Argo and, later on, EMI, Chandos, Abbey, ASV and Meridian, cover an unprecedented range of repertoire for one choral establishment under a single director; his final disc in 1991 was his 60th recording and

#### THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



**The Sound of St. John's**  
The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge / George Guest  
Nimbus

devoted to works he'd commissioned especially for St John's. The choir today under Andrew Nethsingha remains at the top of the tree and has just launched its own label with an acclaimed disc of music by the late Johnian composer Jonathan Harvey. Guest himself is perhaps best summed up by leading baritone Simon Keenlyside: 'I can truthfully say that whichever great artists, singers, conductors I've worked with since, I've never encountered more wonderful musicians and music-making than at St John's with George Guest. He used to fire us up and tell us that life was nothing without passion. One of my first tours with the choir was to Chartres Cathedral. We sang Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge noire*. When I hear that, I can see it and smell it all. And it still sends shivers down my spine.' **G**

# Instrumental



Rob Cowan listens to a fine new disc of Reger's solo violin works:

'Wallin doesn't so much take all this in his stride as stride into the fray with total confidence' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



Jed Distler listens to a collection of Brazilian piano sonatas:

'His tonal sheen, wide dynamic range, ear for nuance and pinpoint technique make a compelling case' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**

## JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas - No 1, BWV1001;

No 2, BWV1003; No 3, BWV1005

**Midori Seiler** vn

Berlin Classics (0300721BC (68' • DDD)



Midori Seiler's recording of the unaccompanied Partitas of JS Bach

(released five years ago – 4/11), had a number of difficulties that stood in the way of its overall appeal. These not only took the form of inconsistent tempi but also raised a barrier between performance and listener by over-emphasising what were otherwise sensitive insights. That is far less in evidence in this companion volume of the Sonatas, although it hasn't been entirely erased. It's a shame because, as with the first, this is a recording that shows Seiler to be a wonderful period performer (best known for her work with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Anima Eterna). The Second Sonata, in A minor, she captures particularly beautifully, displaying a power and clarity of phrasing and articulation usually more the domain of modern players with their robust bows, strings and set-ups, while keeping its sadness firmly within the realms of the human through understated expression and gentle articulation.

However, there are some frustrating issues. The broken and spread chords at the heart of so many of the movements, for instance, are consistently slow enough to suggest an overstatement that distracts from the music and its direction. That is a particularly unwelcome diversion in the opening of the First Sonata, in G minor, where it is also combined with a thinness of sound that cannot support such a reduction in their speeds.

Nonetheless, there is still a strong sense in all this that Seiler believes that Bach's compositional facility provides a stern framework for much of the freedom in which the fluidity of its melody is able to

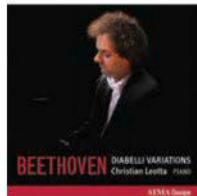
flourish – an absolute necessity when the backbone of these pieces demands a balance between vertical harmony and linear melodic beauty. **Caroline Gill**

## Beethoven

Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli, Op 120

**Christian Leotta** pf

ATMA Classique (ACD2 2485 (55' • DDD)



The ups and downs characterising Christian Leotta's recent Beethoven sonata cycle spill over into his *Diabelli Variations*, which has a lot going for it, yet is also problematic in spots.

Emphatic accents contribute towards the Diabelli waltz theme's ever so slightly slowing down as it progresses, although the first variation's *maestoso* march stands out for steady gravitas. Vars 3 and 4, by contrast, are attractively fluid and conversational. Var 5 is not quite a true *vivace*, yet Leotta's care with dynamics and tightly coiled rhythms compensate. However, Var 10's broken chords spring from the starting gate and gather wild dramatic steam. Leotta's tiny hesitations over Var 13's *subito* dynamics soften the music's angular bite and humour, while Var 15's accented up-beats prevent the *molto scherzando* rhythm from taking wing. The driving pulse connecting Vars 16 and 17 sometimes loses steam when Leotta works too hard finding meaningful inflections in the busy right-hand writing, in contrast to his energetic momentum and astute voice leading in Var 19.

Conversely, Leotta's awkward tempo transitions in Var 21 fail to impart contrasting character to the *allegro con brio* and *meno allegro* sections. Like Alfred Brendel, Leotta plays Var 22's homage to Mozart's 'Notte e giorno faticar' slower than Beethoven's *allegro molto* implies. The lightness and suppleness of Var 27's triplets grow texturally heavier and slower as they unfold. Given some of Leotta's

hauntingly sustained Beethoven sonata slow movements, I'm surprised by his perfunctory, unyielding *largo* Var 31. Var 32's fugal strands in close proximity ring out with power and clarity, giving way to a tinkly, heavily accented and graceless *Menuetto*. Aside from stridency in the loudest moments, the engineering is fine, as are the detailed and informative booklet-notes. **Jed Distler**

## Brahms

'Works for Solo Piano, Vol 6'

Canon, *Anhlll* No 2. Gavotte (Gluck), *Anhla* No 2. Gigue - WoO4 *posth* No 1; WoO4 *posth* No 2. Hungarian Dances, WoO1 - No 2; No 4; No 6; No 7; No 8; No 9; No 10. Intermezzo, Op 118 No 6. Eight Piano Pieces, Op 76 - No 5, Capriccio; No 7, Intermezzo; No 8, Capriccio. 'Rakoczy' March, *Anhlll* No 10. Four Studies, *Anhla* No 1

**Barry Douglas** pf

Chandos (CHAN10903 (77' • DDD)



With all of the inter-opus mixing and matching characterising the first five volumes of Barry Douglas's Brahms cycle, a few stragglers from the Opp 76 and 118 *Klavierstücke* and seven *Hungarian Dances* got left behind. Not to worry: they materialise in the sixth and final volume, along with various transcriptions and study pieces.

Douglas's hefty, full-bodied sound, built from the bottom up, befits the mellow power of Brahms's sound world. He plays the three Op 76 selections outstandingly well, especially the C major, where his rubatos underline how the phrases often cross over the bar-lines. In the dark E flat minor Op 118 Intermezzo, most pianists focus attention on the right-hand melody and treat the rumbling left-hand lines as muted filigree. Douglas, however, does almost the exact opposite, and the effect is revelatory. His *Hungarian Dances* have plenty of fanciful ebb and flow, although some listeners may prefer crisper, more



Midori Seiler: completing her survey of Bach's unaccompanied violin works with the three Sonatas

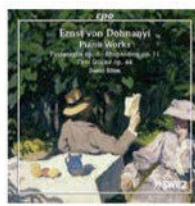
ebullient interpretations in the manner of Cédric Tiberghien or Julius Katchen. The little F minor Canon and the Gigues benefit from Douglas's pointed clarity and control. Despite his more than capable performance, neither he nor any other pianist can convince me that Brahms's literal-minded *Rakoczy* March arrangement isn't a useless piece of dead weight (bring on Liszt's 15th Rhapsody, please!).

As for Brahms's challenging left-hand transformation of Weber's *Perpetuum mobile* and the study after Chopin's Op 25 No 2 Etude, where the quicksilver right-hand single line is rendered in sixths, Douglas is outclassed by Idil Biret's faster, more assured and vividly detailed renditions. He holds Brahms's left-hand transcription of the Bach D minor Chaconne together largely through nuanced rumination, emphasising poetry over the architectural concentration distinguishing Krystian Zimmerman's still unsurpassed and long out-of-print DG traversal. If you've been following Douglas's often admirable yet inconsistent Brahms cycle from the start, you'll know what to expect. That includes Chandos's exemplary engineering.

**Jed Distler**

## Dohnányi

Passacaglia, Op 6. Three Singular  
Pieces, Op 44. Four Rhapsodies, Op 11  
Daniel Röhm pf  
CPO ® CPO777 970-2 (52' • DDD)



Daniel Röhm (b1974, Böblingen, Germany) is a new name to me but a pianist who emerges from this recital with great credit – imaginative, capricious, lyrical and with technique aplenty in reserve. At times he can be a little, let's say, forthright at *fff*, but rather someone who likes to exploit the full dynamic range of a decent concert grand (well recorded, by the way) than the timid halfway house one hears so often.

The main selling point here is Dohnányi's early (1900), rarely recorded Passacaglia in E flat minor, Op 6, the first time I have come across it and, I hope, not the last. If Brahms is somewhat in evidence, Dohnányi is decidedly his own man in this compact and resourceful work (it lasts 13'10", an ideal recital number). The listener need have no concern about being 'unduly distracted by the demigorgic supervision of the ideas' or by the

'quadrature of the circle in which the various musical strands of the then present are joined together' (I quote from the disc's exorbitantly prolix booklet and its unbearably leaden translation).

This and the *Three Singular Pieces*, Op 44 (from 1951 and here drily entitled *Drei Stücke für Klavier*) were recorded in 2010, the *Four Rhapsodies*, Op 11, back in 2007. The latter two works appear on Vol 1 of Martin Roscoe's ongoing complete Dohnányi solo piano music. Roscoe's more nuanced and tonally varied playing in his 2011 Potton Hall recording for Hyperion is preferable but it's a close-run thing, with both pianists wittily chipper in the Poulencian passages of the famous Third Rhapsody, making the most of the 'Dies irae' Fourth Rhapsody and clearly enjoying themselves in the jokey Op 44 pieces. **Jeremy Nicholas**

*Singular Pieces, Rhapsodies – selected comparison:*  
Roscoe (3/12) (HYPE) CDA67871

## Liszt

'Angelus – Sacred Piano Music'  
Angelus! Prière aux anges gardiens, S163 No 1.  
Ave Maria (Die Glocken von Rom), S182. Ave  
Maria II, S504. Deux Légendes, S175. Harmonies  
poétiques et religieuses, S173 – No 3,

Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude; No 5, Pater noster; No 8, Miserere. O Roma nobilis, S546a. Totentanz, S525. Via Crucis, S504a. Zwei Transcriptionen über Themen aus Mozarts Requiem, S550  
**Irene Russo** *pf*  
 Brilliant  95196 (148' • DDD)



*Via Crucis*, Liszt's startling late-period masterpiece, employs tortuous chromaticism

and violent dissonance to create a far more 'graphic' evocation of the Crucifixion than that of the earlier 'Stabat mater' of *Christus*. The pastiche-like insertion of Gregorian and Lutheran elements anticipates similar procedures in 20th-century art and literature, even as it testifies to the breadth of Liszt's personal theology. Small wonder that this radical work, still disquieting to 21st-century ears, was refused when offered for publication in 1884. Versions for solo voices, choir and organ, for piano four-hands and for solo piano are all notated in the original manuscript score. But despite the vivid musical imagery of *Via Crucis*, few pianists attempt it. Tempi that approach stasis, a starkly ascetic keyboard style that occasionally lapses into monody and a spiritual dimension more suggested than explicit combine to make the score daunting to performer and audience alike. It's a hard sell.

Happily, the Italian pianist Irene Russo is fully equal to the task. She possesses the courage, pianistic finesse, myriad sensitivities and, above all, the requisite imagination to make *Via Crucis* both a gripping drama and a cathartic spiritual journey. Her grasp of both Latin and German prosody allows the texts to sing. Intellectually and emotionally, the piece is hers. She is equally persuasive in several stripped-down hymn settings, including *O Roma nobilis* and two *Ave Marias* from the 1860s.

As if this weren't enough, the programme of this two-CD set extends to a brilliant and artistically distinctive solo *Totentanz*. The three opening riffs, effortlessly sweeping up and down the keyboard with every harmony intact, signal that we're in for something special. Particularly remarkable is Russo's original rubato, which she uses not only for rhetorical emphasis but to delineate formal space in ways that seem idiomatically Lisztian. The two *St Francis Legends* fairly shimmer with proto-Impressionist colour and nuance. Excerpts from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* and the third *Année*

are conceptually fresh, each imbued with individual character. Of these, a calm, stunningly luminous 'Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude' is the standout. Transcriptions, represented by the 'Confutatis' and 'Lacrymosa' from Mozart's Requiem, are also given sensitive readings.

Russo is that rarity among pianists, capable of encompassing the varied facets of Liszt's art with ease, empathy and authority. If I still prefer the late Brigitte Engerer's *Via Crucis* (Naïve, 7/07) above all others, hers is a collaboration with Laurence Equilbey's Accentus and therefore an unfair comparison. Russo's richly atmospheric interpretations represent Liszt-playing of a high order. This is something you shouldn't miss.

**Patrick Rucker**

### Liszt

Etudes d'exécution transcendante, S139

**Kirill Gerstein** *pf*

Myrios  MYRO19 (64' • DDD/DSD)



Kirill Gerstein's last appearance in these pages was for his premiere recording of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto using what is, in effect, the composer's conducting score (ie the work's second version, rather than the third and final version familiar today – 2/15). His new disc is of Liszt's final 1852 version of the 12 études he had first mapped out in 1826 as a 15-year-old boy and revised in 1837.

It is not every pianist who is able to risk the formidable challenge of playing all twelve *Transcendental Etudes* in sequence live in concert. The amount of stamina, accuracy, power, musicianship and plain technical prowess needed to pull it off successfully is beyond the reach of most. I had the pleasure of hearing Gerstein do just that at the Wigmore Hall last year in a memorable concert, without him, it seemed, breaking sweat.

Gerstein reignites many of those elements in this superb studio account of Liszt's pianistic vade mecum, a recording (on a beautifully voiced instrument) that is well able to stand alongside the benchmarks and personal favourites I listed in my review of Dinara Klinzon's excellent new version (4/16) – Lazar Berman, Vladimir Ovchinnikov, Georges Cziffra and Boris Berezovsky. Gerstein's overall timing (64'00") is similar to these giants.

From the opening 'Preludio' (played as a proper introduction, not as a macho wham-bang fest) and exacting demands of No 2

(entitled 'Fusée' by Busoni), we gather that Gerstein is no mere showman but a storyteller who, even at the height of Liszt's ferocious challenges, lets the music breathe, controlling its ebb and flow with enormous skill. You won't, I think, hear better versions of Nos 11 and 12 ('Harmonies du soir' and 'Chasse-neige'), though I found Nos 7 ('Eroica') and 10 (in F minor) slightly studio-bound. One could nitpick over various minor details (the missing appoggiatura on the last chord of 'Eroica', the end of the second page of 'Ricordanza' is not a true *ppp* and Liszt's vivid *disperato* request in No 10 is not really met) but I'm disinclined to. Overall, it's a terrific achievement. **Jeremy Nicholas**

### Reger

Four Solo Violin Sonatas, Op 42

**Ulf Wallin** *vn*

CPO  CPO777 762-2 (57' • DDD)



JS Bach hovers very audibly behind of these four wonderful works, sometimes, metaphorically speaking, even stepping forwards to take the fiddle from Reger's hands and placing it in his own. The most obvious case in point is the 10-minute *Andante con moto* that closes the fourth and last of the sonatas, a 'Reger Chaconne' in all but name. The cumulative effect is similar to that of Bach's own Chaconne, and so are some of the techniques employed, most particularly the rolling arpeggios towards the close of the movement.

Reger dedicated the sonatas to the German violinist, composer and publisher Willy Burmester, and while the Bachian axis is fairly obvious, the sheer variety on offer is extraordinary. The first of the four sonatas sets off to a musically imposing but technically taxing *Allegro energico* that resembles a sizeable concerto cadenza. A confessional *Adagio* follows, then a mischievous *Prestissimo* where chords and pizzicatos alternate, and a finale that opens like the fugue from Bach's First Solo Violin Sonata. As to Reger's Second Sonata, don't be fooled by the first movement's *Allegro con grazia* marking: this is playful, variegated music that operates at various tempi and dynamics, a caprice in all but name, fashioned rather in the manner of Fritz Kreisler. The *Andantino* is a variety of siciliano, and there's a busy *Prestissimo* with fast runs, expressive double-stops and striking key changes. The Third Sonata's first movement features wide



Irene Russo: an unmissable recording of Liszt's 'sacred' piano works

leaps and intense chordal writing, whereas in the finale the leaps are even wider.

Ulf Wallin doesn't so much take all this in his stride as stride into the fray with total confidence, his playing agile, tonally rich, spiky where necessary and brilliant too. A very characterful and musically engaging alternative version by Renate Eggebrecht-Kupsa (Troubadisc) very occasionally sounds over-effortful, though her connection with the music's emotional core undeniably leaves a strong impression. But Wallin's combination of musical sensitivity and technical excellence makes him a secure front-runner. A superb CD. **Rob Cowan**

*Selected comparison:*

Eggebrecht-Kupsa (TROU) TRO-CD01422

## Rota

Variazioni e fuga nei dodici toni sul nome di Bach. Quindici Preludi. Valzer. Ippolito Gioca. Sette Pezzi difficili per bambini. Fantasia

**Christian Seibert** *pf*

CPO (CPO555 019-2 (70' • DDD)



Considering his formidable keyboard facility, it's surprising that

Nino Rota composed relatively few original piano works, although his celebrated film scores have often turned up as piano arrangements. For the most part his piano writing represents a tuneful, imaginative, intelligently wrought, intimately idiomatic and unpretentious fusion of mind and heart.

In the *Variations and Fugue on Bach's Name*, sample the unpredictable harmonic twists and turns as both hands dance a tarantella in double notes, or Var 5's wistful quasi-choral prelude, or Var 11's cascading runs which sound like what might have happened if Respighi and Poulenc merged their DNA. The fugue begins with the B-A-C-H theme in foreboding octaves, followed by Busoni-ish gothic doodling that leads into Crisco-thick chordal climaxes making Reger sound like Satie. But Rota's wry wit and subversive charm prevail, and you're forever hooked.

Naturally you need a pianist with a flexible technique and a large portfolio of nuance to bring all of this off. Such is Christian Seibert, and his performance offers more tonal variety and sparkle than Danielle Laval's out-of-print 1993 Rota piano music cycle (Auvidis, 1/94). Seibert characterfully pinpoints the 15 Preludes' contrasts between petulant, motoric and

terse movements and those that are lyrically bittersweet. A little Waltz from 1945 might aspire to be nothing more than 19th-century salon fluff but it also foreshadows the composer of *Amarcord*. A 15-minute Fantasia in G, written for but never performed by Rota's friend Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, is rather massive, heavy-going and less inspired than the aforementioned large-scale compositions. Still, you won't hear it played better than by Seibert. CPO's superb sound and annotations fuel my recommendation.

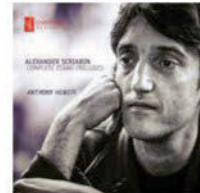
**Jed Distler**

## Scriabin

Complete Piano Preludes

**Anthony Hewitt** *pf*

Champs Hill (CHRCDO72 (135' • DDD)



From the first prelude in B major to the last one in no designated key, the 90 miniatures on this fine two-disc set from Anthony Hewitt trace the extraordinary path of Scriabin's creative development from 1889 (when he was in his teens) up to 1914, the year before his death. Much of the material

here is rarely explored, attention generally tending to focus on the 24 Preludes Op 11, composed at various times and in different places chiefly during the years 1894–96, with one of them, the C major No 1, dating to 1893 and another, the B minor No 6, to 1889 while Scriabin was in Kiev. Only on publication were they arranged in sequence, the major key preludes separated by a fifth (C major, G major, D major and so on) with each one followed by a prelude in the relative minor (A minor, E minor, B minor). This follows the same pattern as that of the 24 Preludes, Op 28, by Chopin, a composer with whom Scriabin's preludes are frequently compared and to whom Scriabin occasionally nods, most notably in his homage to Chopin's 'Funeral March' Sonata in the B flat minor Prelude No 16.

But any similarities are only superficial, since Scriabin is already venturing into realms of harmony and texture that Chopin would not have envisaged. The curious, weightless B flat Prelude No 21, wandering from 3/4 to 5/4, is a case in point, but there are many other instances here, for all that the ear might reference Chopin's 'Revolutionary' Study when it hears Scriabin's tempestuous F minor Prelude, Op 17 No 5, from 1895. Many of these earlier preludes were composed contemporaneously with the 24 included in Op 11 but, as Hewitt shows in these instinctive, fully formed interpretations, each has a character of its own. When it comes to the late preludes, say from Op 59 No 2 onwards, Scriabin's harmonic vocabulary can no longer be contained within any formal key signature, and Hewitt captures ideally the music's poise between structure and fluidity, passionate drama and introspection, or, as Scriabin himself has it, the contrasts between *belliqueux* and *douloureux*. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Weinberg · Shostakovich

**Shostakovich** Three Fantastic Dances<sup>a</sup>

**Weinberg** Solo Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 82; No 2, Op 95; No 3, Op 126

**Linus Roth** vn <sup>a</sup>**José Gallardo** pf

Challenge Classics  CC72688

(74' • DDD/DSD)



The sonata for solo string instrument is a genre Weinberg made more or less his own in the Soviet Union, especially after Shostakovich's death. There are three for violin, four each for viola and cello and one for double bass, most of them fearsomely difficult, yet also entirely

serious, sometimes to the point of symphonic, in conception.

Complementing his fine recordings of the violin-and-piano and violin *concertante* works, Linus Roth offers controlled and superbly prepared accounts. The five-movement First Sonata is dauntingly large-scale and technically knotty, especially in its outer movements. Here Roth is understandably rather circumspect in the opening quadruple-stopped chords (was Weinberg perhaps thinking of the cadenzas in the Berg Concerto?). But so too is Yuri Kalnits, another doughty and dedicated Weinberg exponent. Kalnits is definitely the braver in the fourth movement, where Roth makes more drastic serious concessions to tempo in order to negotiate the false harmonics.

The Second Sonata is a concatenation of seven studies, generally more genial in tone than than the First. Here Roth is the easier on the ear, if only because Kalnits's Toccata recording is marred by background traffic noise. In the Third Sonata Kremer is *hors concours* for range of colour and dynamic and sheer soloistic presence – a reminder that these works were written with some of the titans of the Soviet violin-playing tradition in mind. But Roth is also a first-rate exponent, and his performances of Harry Glickman's arrangements of Shostakovich's *Three Fantastic Dances* – sounding a good deal more leisurely than the piano originals – are also well worth hearing. **David Fanning**

*Sonata No 1 – selected comparison:*

*Kahuits* (A/1) (TOCC) TOCC0007

*Sonata No 2 – selected comparison:*

*Kahuits* (4/14) (TOCC) TOCC0026

*Sonata No 3 – selected comparison:*

*Kremer* (4/14) (ECM) 481 0669

## José Iturbi

'His complete solo repertoire on RCA Victor and HMV'

**Albéniz** Córdoba, Op 232 No 4. Malagueña, Op 165 No 3. Sevilla, Op 47 No 3 **JS Bach** Fantasia, BWV906 **Beethoven** Andante favori, WoO57. Für Elise, WoO59 **Chopin** Etude, Op 10 No 12.

Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op 66. Mazurka No 5, Op 7

No 1. Polonaise No 6, Op 53. Preludes, Op 28 – No 9; No 10. Waltzes – No 6, 'Minute', Op 64 No 1;

No 7, Op 64 No 2 **Debussy** Deux Arabesques (two recordings). Estampes – No 3, Jardins sous la pluie. Rêverie. Suite bergamasque – Clair de lune

**Falla** El Amor brujo – Dance of Terror; Ritual Fire

**Dance Gould** Blues. Boogie Woogie Etude

**Granados** Danzas españolas – No 2; No 5; No 10.

Goyescas – Quejas, o La maja y el ruiseñor

**Infante** Sevillañas **Iturbi** Canción de cuna.

Pequeña danza española **Lazăr** Marche funèbre

**Liszt** Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este, S163 No 4.

Liebestraum, S541 No 3 **López-Chavarri** The Old

Moorish Castle **Mozart** Piano Sonatas – No 11, K331; No 12, K332 **Paderewski** Minuet **Paradies** Toccata **Rachmaninov** Prelude, Op 3 No 2 **Saint-Saëns** Allegro appassionato, Op 70 **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas – Kk27; Kk159 **Schumann** Arabesque, Op 18. Romance, Op 28 No 2 **Tchaikovsky** The Seasons, Op 37b – June (Barcarolle); November (Troika) **José Iturbi** pf APR ③ APR7307 (3h 32' • ADD) Recorded 1933–52



During the 1940s, the Spanish pianist of Basque ancestry José Iturbi made no fewer than nine Hollywood films, usually playing himself. His recording of the Op 53 Polonaise for the Chopin biopic *A Song to Remember* sold a million copies. Iturbi's role in the popularisation of classical music in the US would be difficult to overestimate. But perhaps because he recorded relatively little after his Hollywood heyday, his career fell into relative obscurity after his death in 1980.

What a pleasure, then, to encounter the full extent of Iturbi's superb piano playing and elegant musicianship. Prior to his enrolment in the Paris Conservatoire at 13, he had lessons with Wanda Landowska, who seems to have been a decisive influence both technically and musically. One hears it in his fiery, beautifully paced Bach C minor Fantasia but even more markedly in the Mozart Sonatas, K331 and 332. It is easy to understand why his Mozart playing was so admired by pianists as dissimilar as William Kapell, Thelonious Monk and Julius Katchen.

Beethoven's *Andante favori* is a model of tenderness and poise. It also prominently displays that inerrant rhythmic undergirding that lends Iturbi's interpretations, regardless of shifts in interpretative fashion, their perennial freshness. The poignant longing of a lyrical Schumann *Arabesque*, kaleidoscopic in its variety and attention to detail, leaves you wondering exactly what it is that other pianists miss about this well-worn warhorse. The same sense of understated rhetorical aptness is at the heart of the F sharp major Romance. Liszt is represented by a passionate *Liebestraum*, which follows the scansion of Freilegrath's poem as though it were sung, and by a bubbling *Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*, whose tremolando fairly shimmer. At the point where Liszt superscribes the passage from St John



Star of nine Hollywood films, the Spanish pianist José Iturbi is celebrated in a new release from APR

about the waters of everlasting life, Iturbi manages a profound change of tone which hovers like an aura about the remainder of the piece.

If Iturbi's Chopin playing seems marginally less convincing, nevertheless his *Fantaisie-impromptu* is persuasive, both for its polished pianism and its chaste sentiment. Each of the two Op 64 Waltzes is litlingly direct. Following an appropriately gloomy Rachmaninov C sharp minor Prelude, the Paderewski Minuet is given a sincere, straightforward reading, backed by rather greater pianistic resources than one is accustomed to from the composer's recordings. The clarity and precision brought to Saint-Saëns's *Allegro appassionato* seem a perfect marriage of style and content.

In Debussy, we glimpse another realm of Iturbi's idiosyncratic expertise. The character of each piece is carefully wrought, though all are informed by his innately Spanish rhythmicality. This is Impressionism that takes as its starting point, in place of metric lassitude, a steady beat which is then stretched and moulded with infinite varieties of rubato. The refreshing overall impression is of great colouristic resource devoid of soggy sentimentality. (One is grateful to the producers for including two versions of the

*Deux Arabesques*, the first from 1939 and the second from 1950.)

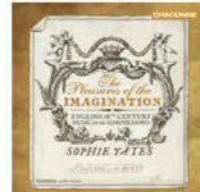
Naturally enough, Iturbi's interpretations of Spanish music have a special authority and élan. The distinct personalities of Albéniz ('Sevilla', 'Cordoba', 'Malagueña') and Granados ('The Maiden and the Nightingale', three *Spanish Dances*) stand out in vivid relief. 'Cordoba' emerges as an epic in miniature, while the chromatic richness of 'The Maiden and the Nightingale' seems to prefigure everything that was to occur harmonically in European music through to the Second World War. Granados's wistful nostalgia is exchanged for searing intensity in the two selections from Falla's *El Amor brujo*.

Transfers are characteristically APR, which is to say, among the best. A fascinating, often surprising set that rewards repeated listening.

Patrick Rucker

### 'The Pleasures of the Imagination'

**Arne** Sonata No 3 **JC Bach** Sonata, Op 17 No 2  
**Blow** Dr Blow's Chaconne in Faut. Morlake  
**Ground** Clarke Suite No 2 **Croft** Suite **Greene**  
**Suite of Lessons** **R Jones** Third Set of Lessons  
**Sophie Yates** hpd  
**Chandos** Chaconne © CHAN0814 (75 • DDD)



Eighteenth-century harpsichord music by British composers seldom gets much attention compared to German and French ones and Scarlatti, so although several of the composers here have occasionally been the subjects of dedicated recordings, it is nice to have a selection sampling across the range. Moreover, while most of them are relatively familiar names for one reason or another, none is really remembered primarily for his keyboard music, so there really are some discoveries to be made.

Sophie Yates (who has shown a liking for such programmes as this) has compiled a more or less chronologically arranged showcase, revealing along the way a move from French influence in Blow, Clarke and Croft to Italianate in Greene, Jones and Arne (Scarlatti was especially popular in England around mid-century) and finally to the pre-Classical style of JC Bach. Blow's *Chaconne in Faut* and *Morlake Ground* both bowl along with bubbling imagination, and there is a cheerful English robustness to Clarke's suite too, compared to which Croft's edges towards a more Handelian



STEVE REICH

DOUBLE SEXTET (2007)  
RADIO REWRITE (2013)  
ENSEMBLE SIGNAL / BRAD LUBMAN



Following their internationally acclaimed recording of Steve Reich's 1974-76 masterpiece *Music For 18 Musicians*, Ensemble Signal and Brad Lubman present two recent pieces by the composer: "Double Sextet" from 2007 and "Radio Rewrite" from 2012 – strong, tuneful, energetic, tightly made works.

*'One of the most vital groups of its kind'*  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
80 ANS !  
YEARS  
STEVE REICH

**SPPF**  
les labels indépendants

[harmoniamundi.com](http://harmoniamundi.com)



Antonio Vaz Lemes: a Latin American Pollini in works by four Brazilian composers

expansiveness. The atmosphere changes in a suite by Greene, tuneful and bustling with broken-chord patterns and bass octaves, characteristics which are then offered with more 'orchestral' weight and impact in a suite by Richard Jones, a barely known composer of much interest (as Mitzi Meyerson's excellent *Glossa* recordings have shown). Arne's sonata shows his usual melodic charm and elegance, before JC Bach changes everything with his mix of Mozartian grace and *Sturm und Drang* drive.

As usual, Yates plays with precision and a winning sense of enjoyment and bounce. She makes less use of spread chords and rhythmic dislocation than many other harpsichordists do these days, which can affect the sheer beauty of tone emerging from her two not hugely dissimilar French-style harpsichords, while providing crisp gains in clarity and presence, and perhaps too in the music's forthright English feel.

Lindsay Kemp

### 'Sonata brasileira'

**Amazonas** Sonatina, 'Hommage à Francis Poulenc' **Guarnieri** Piano Sonata **Mehmari** Piano Sonata **Villani Côrtes** Piano Sonata No 1 **Antonio Vaz Lemes** pf  
Odradek Ⓜ ODRCD332 (58' • DDD)



Here are four sonatas by four Brazilian composers whose careers span three

generations. With one arguable exception, their work is most likely unknown outside of specialist circles, a situation that pianist Antonio Vaz Lemes understandably hopes to remedy. In turn, these composers are lucky to have Lemes in their corner. His tonal sheen, wide dynamic range, ear for nuance and pinpoint technique make a compelling case for each work.

André Mehmari's multifaceted career blurs boundaries between popular and classical worlds, and you hear this in the tuneful, easygoing first movement of his Sonata in A. However, it's the concluding second movement's haunting, bell-like high-register writing, stark declamatory chords and carefully deployed sonorities that make the deeper impact.

Marcelo Amazonas's Sonatina subtitled *Hommage à Francis Poulenc* evokes the French master's flippant humour, albeit without his surface élan and harmonic imagination. Indeed, the two movements of E Villani Côrtes's Sonata No 1 comes

closer to the Poulencian mark, but with extended detours into material that wouldn't be out of place in a Stephen Sondheim musical. The Sonata concludes with a brief, ebullient tarantella, whose repeated notes delightfully dance off the page.

Camargo Guarnieri may be the most familiar of the four composers. His three-movement Sonata represents a terse, dissonant departure from earlier works influenced by folkloric elements. Lemes's gaunt sonority, laser-like projection, finely calibrated articulation and uncanny rhythmic equilibrium convey blinding clarity and intense concentration at all times. But also check out the recording on Naxos, with Max Barros's warmer, more flexible pianism and stronger sense of idiomatic 'swing' in the third movement fugue. In essence, Lemes is Pollini to Barros's Rubinstein, and I wouldn't want to be without either interpretation.

Recommended. **Jed Distler**

*Guarnieri – selected comparison:*

Barros (NAXO) 8 572626/7

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# John Corigliano

One of the US's most open-minded composers has embraced everything from film soundtracks to opera, writes Jed Distler

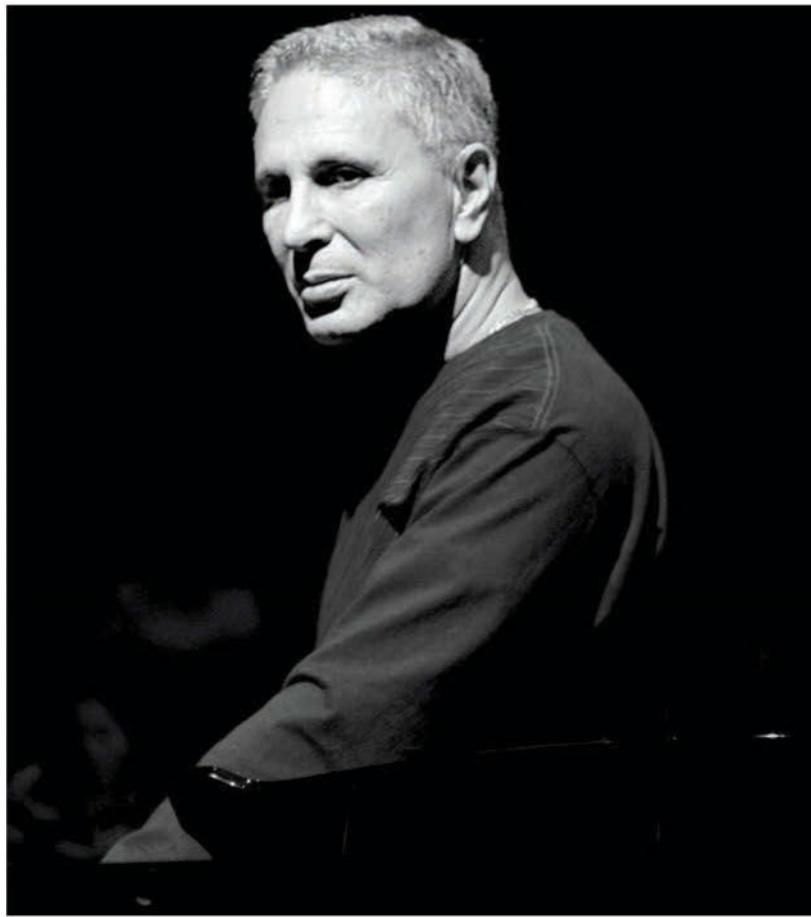
In 1963 an exuberant, abundantly inventive and unambiguously masterful violin sonata by a 25-year-old composer seemingly appeared from out of nowhere. Its sound world was American through and through, with wide interval leaps, polytonal flirtations, catchy motifs and slippery rhythmic shifts. More than half a century later the equally demanding violin and piano parts still look daunting on paper, but tenacious performers invariably find the piece as fun to play as it is to hear.

But the composer's father John Corigliano Senior, to whom the piece was dedicated, didn't want to look at the sonata. The New York Philharmonic concertmaster thought John Junior would never make a living. A musician's life, after all, is hard, and about the worst thing his son could do was to become a composer, despite the fact that the young Corigliano's *Kaleidoscope* for two pianos and *Fern Hill* for chorus, mezzo-soprano and orchestra had already gained serious recognition. When the Sonata won the 1964 Spoleto Prize (unanimously chosen from 100 entries) and had its American premiere the following year, John Sr finally came around, and he made the first of that work's more-than-dozen recordings.

*'I tell my students to listen to every kind of music in the world. Have your opinions, take it all in and learn from it'*

One can trace Corigliano's fastidious workmanship to his erstwhile teachers Otto Luening, Paul Creston and Vittorio Giannini, all highly distinctive composers and seasoned, practical craftsmen. Yet, in the composer's own words, the non-compositional activity that occupied much of Corigliano's time in the 1960s helped him 'get into the living idea of what classical music was in the world'. He worked as a programmer and musical director at local classical music radio stations and produced recordings for Columbia Masterworks. For CBS Television, Corigliano assisted on the production of Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts and Vladimir Horowitz's 1968 televised recital. Apparently Horowitz read Corigliano's newly commissioned four-movement Piano Concerto at sight, and even considered performing it. Decades passed before this elegantly zesty score, premiered in the same year as that televised recital, gained a foothold in the repertoire.

By contrast, Corigliano's next two concerto projects garnered instant critical and popular acclaim, and he credited



them with changing both his art and his career. He embarked on an 'architectural' method of composing in which form and content are carefully vetted.

In an interview with the writer Bruce Duffie, Corigliano succinctly described his methodology. 'Before I write a piece, I don't know what the piece is. I design the piece, build the piece, I find out what the big questions are because they are the ones I want to answer first. Then I ask if it is a multi-movement piece, and if so, what shape are the movements and how do they relate to each other? Would I need motivic material for this, or thematic ideas, or what? And so forth and so on. I narrow the scope little by little until I get into a position where I know what I need. Then I look for and find music.'

Each of the 1975 Oboe Concerto's five brief movements, for example, explores a different aspect of the oboe, such as the tuning ritual (orchestras traditionally tune to the oboe's A natural) and its forceful potential in the lower register. The finale's vivid Middle-Eastern flavour extends to the oboist avoiding lip or tongue contact with the reed in emulation of the Moroccan *rheita*. Similarly, Corigliano's long personal history with members of the New York Philharmonic helped determine the 1977 Clarinet Concerto's accompaniment, with its numerous first-desk solos and chamber-like instrumental combinations, not to mention the musical energy and visual impact of the third movement's flamboyant antiphonal writing that no recording can possibly capture fully.

If anything, the *Pied Piper Fantasy* written for James Galway – who has described Corigliano as a composer who 'will have a direct influence on the course of American music for generations to come' – pushes soloist-orchestra interaction to

## CORIGLIANO FACTS

**Born** New York City,

February 16, 1938

**Breakthrough work**

Clarinet Concerto (1976)

**Awards and honours**

First Composer-in-Residence of Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1987-90); University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award (1991); Academy of Arts and Letters Member (1991); Grammy Awards (1991, 1997, 2009, 2014); Academy Award (1999); Pulitzer Prize (2001)

**Corigliano on Corigliano**

'I'm like a computer that takes in lots of information of incredibly disparate kinds, and all of it mixes up within me and comes out without my necessarily controlling it; it's part of what I'm amassing.'

even more imaginative heights, propelled by a vivid programmatic scenario, and with a dizzying yet cannily calibrated array of stylistic devices. In the final movement, 100 children from the audience playing

flutes and drums join the Piper soloist, following him through the concert hall and out of the doors.

The fairytale legend of the Pied Piper battling a plague of rats, of course, had nothing on the horrifically real AIDS pandemic, depicted with some of Corigliano's most harrowing, emotionally moving and orchestrally resourceful music in Symphony No 1 (1988-9). Its stormy first movement, subtitled 'Apologue: Of Rage and Remembrance' pays gentle tribute to the composer's brilliant pianist friend Sheldon Shkolnik with a snippet from the Albéniz-Godowsky Tango heard on a distant piano underneath a sad and stark string figure. The second movement brings the Tarantella from Corigliano's piano duet *Gazebo Dances* into dark, frightening realms that mirror the stages of AIDS dementia whereby madness reigns between short bursts of lucidity. The lyrical third movement takes its cue from an improvisation by an amateur cellist friend, while the fourth and final movement features melodies based on literary tributes to fallen colleagues and majestic antiphonal brass writing.

LA Opera's recent production and recording (on Pentatone) of Corigliano's first and only opera *The Ghosts of Versailles* – a collaboration with librettist William M Hoffman, who rightly gets equal billing – brought back vivid personal memories of its 1991 premiere at New York's Metropolitan Opera. Back then, I thought the music's wide and wild stylistic trajectory overly clever and self-aware, albeit stunningly realised in sound, abetted by a trusty synthesiser and a band of kazoos. Twenty-five years later, I now perceive the dramatic specificity and psychology governing Corigliano's selective eclecticism, such as the wit and restraint with which he peppers the 'Beaumarchais' part of his opera with allusions to

Rossini patter songs and Mozart, or how he introduces the ghosts with electronic-sounding string glissandos.

I asked Corigliano for a 2006 *Gramophone* feature to trace the evolution of such 'effects' – like those glissandos – and he cited his film work. 'When I was working on *Altered States*', he recalled, 'I had these nine- and 10-minute scenes with no words, and I had to write a lot of busy music, but didn't want to use millions of notes. So I took simple symbols that you use for what I call "motion sonorities" like trills and tremolos, and, for about a week, developed my own versions of them... I'd give a symbol, say, to a section of cellos, to make them play agitatedly, between certain notes as fast as possible. And eventually I brought these techniques into my concert music.' In a similar sense, Corigliano uses short cues from his film score to *The Red Violin* as structural and thematic building blocks for his Violin Concerto of the same name. Yet perhaps the most audacious example of Corigliano expropriating material can be found in his song-cycle *Mr Tambourine Man* for soprano and piano (later scored for amplified soprano and orchestra). Here the composer chooses seven Bob Dylan lyrics and sets them in his own musical language, without knowing Dylan's original melodies.

It's often true that to know the composer is to know the person, and Corigliano's singularly diverse body of work reflects his practical open-mindedness. 'Often the best ideas I get are from things I don't like,' he told writer K Robert Schwarz. 'When I find something problematic, suddenly my mind starts working creatively. I tell my students to listen to every kind of music in the world from every source. Have your opinions, but at the same time take it all in and learn from it.'

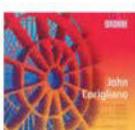
THE BEST CORIGLIANO RECORDINGS  
Music of passion from the composer's long career**Violin Concerto. Violin Sonata**

Joshua Bell vn Jeremy Denk pf

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra / Marin Alsop

Sony Classical (2/08)

Strong personality and virtuoso brilliance inform Corigliano's violin-writing in these two vibrant benchmark works from different periods in the composer's life.

**Phantasmagoria. To Music. Fantasia on an Ostinato. Three Hallucinations**

Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra / Eri Klas

Ondine

The orchestral version of the chamber piece

*Phantasmagoria* reworks parts of Corigliano's opera into a volatile tone-poem, as does the *Fantasia on an Ostinato* originally for piano solo. If you want *Altered States* without the film, try the *Three Hallucinations*. Stunning sound and performances.

**Symphony No 1, 'Of Rage and Remembrance'**

Michelle DeYoung mez Oratorio Society and Choral Arts

Society of Washington; National Symphony Orchestra /

Leonard Slatkin

RCA B&gt; (1/97)

Corigliano's 'AIDS Symphony' stands time's test and continues to make a devastating impression, especially in this most transparent of its three commercial recordings. The gorgeous choral setting of the Symphony's third movement clinches my recommendation.

# Vocal



Ivan Moody listens to two new discs of Rachmaninov's *Vespers*:  
*'It has assumed the status of a classic, a masterpiece of choral writing that transcends rites, genres and languages'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**



Alexandra Coghlan reviews Purcell from the Wigmore Hall:  
*'What could be just another lovely solo recital is subtly but determinedly refocused here as an ensemble affair'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

## Barry

'Barry Meets Beethoven'

Beethoven<sup>a</sup>. Oh Lord, how vain<sup>b</sup>.  
The Coming of Winter<sup>b</sup>. First Sorrow<sup>c</sup>.  
Long Time<sup>b</sup>. Schott & Sons, Mainz<sup>d</sup>  
<sup>ad</sup>Stephen Richardson **bass**, <sup>bd</sup>Chamber Choir  
Ireland; <sup>ac</sup>Crash Ensemble / <sup>abd</sup>Paul Hillier  
Orchid (ORC100055) (71' • DDD • T)



A welcome addition, this, to the Gerald Barry discography. Bookended by two

works setting Beethoven's letters, the disc also features four shorter works setting or otherwise referencing Proust, Kafka, Sir Philip Sydney and medieval Irish poetry ('Barry and Letters' might have been an equally fitting title).

*Beethoven* for bass and ensemble is a verbatim setting of the 'Immortal Beloved' letter. All is as you would expect from Barry: lines with too many words crammed in, the bass singing in falsetto, anti-word painting (emotionally pained words set to cheery music), abrupt changes of style (merry jaunt to woozy atonality to beautiful tonal *adagietto*) and so on.

It all works, as does *Schott & Sons, Mainz* for bass and chorus, which sets a series of Beethoven's letters to his (and Barry's) publisher. That's because what might at first seem a tiresome musical irony in Barry's settings – overtly emotional text set to banal music, banal text set to overtly dramatic music – reveals itself over time to be something more thoughtful and indeed humane. Showing Beethoven in all aspects, cantankerous as well as sympathetic, the two works present a different kind of heroism, that of the everyday. In his booklet-notes Paul Griffiths suggests that they comprise a Beethoven opera; although that's overstated, there is a coherent portrait here.

The other works are mixed. The string quartet *First Sorrow* is desultory in a good sense, wandering through a modal landscape before breaking into a chorale on 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'. *Long Time* for chorus is

desultory in a bad sense, setting the opening pages of *Swann's Way* to C major scales. In terms of sound production, the long reverberation of All Hallows Church, Dublin, at times blurs Barry's sharp contours and renders words unintelligible. The performers, all long-standing Barry interpreters, are in fine form, Stephen Richardson's commanding bass in particular standing out. **Liam Cagney**

## Blow

'Symphony Anthems'

God spake sometime in visions. Hear my voice, O God. O sing unto the Lord. When the Son of Man. When Israel came out of Egypt. I was glad  
**Choir of New College, Oxford; St James' Baroque / Robert Quinney**

Novum (NCR1389) (73' • DDD • T)



This is the first album devoted exclusively to John Blow's church music since the Parley of Instruments and the Choir of Winchester Cathedral collaborated many moons ago for a memorable instalment in Hyperion's 'The English Orpheus' series (3/96). There is only minimal overlap with the six anthems chosen by Robert Quinney for his debut recording at the helm of the Choir of New College, Oxford, and these performances are an assured synthesis of elegant musicality, judicious ear for contrapuntal detail and informed scholarship. Moreover, the players of St James' Baroque correctly use tenor and bass violins (not anachronistic violas and cellos, nor extraneous double basses), and their bowed instruments use equal tension across all their gut strings; such factors assist the intimacy and elegant poise of the polyphonic 'symphonies' played during all but one of the anthems.

The diligently researched programme covers the scope of Blow's career, the earliest work being the plaintive symphony anthem *When Israel came out of Egypt*, probably composed for Easter 1674; its concise string symphonies and expressive solo quartet verses are all performed exquisitely. Another

less familiar gem is *Hear my voice, O God*, sung at the Chapel Royal in 1683 in the wake of a failed assassination plot against Charles II and the Duke of York; the psalm praying for deliverance from enemies presumably struck a poignant chord at court, and this performance achieves a beguiling juxtaposition of penitential strings, shapely choral passages and polished solo singing in the verses (notably from the countertenor Alexander Chance).

At the other end of the scale, *God spake sometime in visions* was sung at the coronation of James II and Mary of Modena in 1685; the eight-part choral singing is relaxed yet luminous and verse passages are judged beautifully by assorted choristers and clerks. The substantial *O sing unto the Lord* (1701) features more elaborate solo-voice verses, a sense of dramatic pacing, contrasting moods and textures, and a contrapuntal 'Alleluia' refrain that hints towards a proto-Handelian musical language. In Blow's flamboyant setting of *I was glad*, composed for the official opening in 1697 of the chancel of Wren's new St Paul's Cathedral, two trumpets make radiant contributions to Guy Cutting's stratospherically high tenor solo 'The king shall rejoice' and several choral sections.

All the works are given splendid performances which not only remind us that there is more to Blow than merely being Purcell's mentor but also confirm that New College's famous choir is in very good hands. **David Vickers**

## Brahms

Lieder und Gesänge, Op 32. Vier ernste Gesänge, Op 121. Sechs Lieder, Op 85 - No 1, Sommerabend; No 2, Mondenschein. Vier Lieder, Op 96 - No 1, Der Tod, das ist die Kühle Nacht; No 3, Es schauen die Blumen; No 4, Meerfahrt

<sup>ad</sup>Matthias Goerne **bar** Christoph Eschenbach **pf**  
Harmonia Mundi (HMC90 2174) (56' • DDD • T/t)



A couple of years after completing his leisurely mix-and-match Schubert series



Chamber Choir Ireland feature on a new disc of music by Gerald Barry on Orchid

for Harmonia Mundi, Matthias Goerne has made it on to Brahms. It's music that's very well suited to his voice: grainy and gentle and with that characteristic burnished-mahogany tone, but at its most beautiful at around *mezzo forte* and below – when pushed louder it can become a little woofy, and the tone remains veiled across the range.

But this is supremely seductive Lieder singing, with a natural intelligence and ease with the words, matched by playing from Christoph Eschenbach (also at the keyboard for that final Schubert instalment, a similarly beguiling *Winterreise* – 1/14), that coaxes and caresses the piano with loving delicacy. And listen to the opening of 'Meerfahrt': you can almost feel in his playing the boat's oars digging deep into the watery depths.

But for all the beauty on show, I never get any sense of self-indulgence or narcissism – not even in performances of the Heine pair of 'Sommerabend' and 'Mondenschein' in which time seems to stand still. In the *Vier ernste Gesänge*, those brought up on Hans Hotter might admittedly miss the voluminousness of a true bass, especially in 'Ich wandte mich, und sahe', but the seraphic, weary calm that concludes 'O Tod, wie bitter bist du', offers ample recompense, as does the sense of quiet, heartfelt earnestness Goerne creates throughout.

The Op 32 *Lieder und Gesänge* have a less illustrious history on record, but Goerne's

recording must be among the finest of recent accounts: certainly he's a better fit, for me, in terms of voice than Ian Bostridge, for all the English tenor's artistry (Hyperion, 9/15); and I also prefer his approach to that of the rather more burly and garrulous Thomas Quasthoff (DG, 6/00). The stream of 'Der Strom, der neben mir verrauschte' feels a tad viscous perhaps, but Goerne's new-found Wagnerian power helps him bring a real sense of fist-shaking resolve at the conclusion of 'Wehe, so willst du mich wieder' and a powerful angsty gravitas to 'Du sprichst, dass ich mich täuschte'. It's nevertheless the heart-stopping beauty of his – and Eschenbach's – take on the concluding 'Wie bist du, meine Königin' that lingers in the memory. **Hugo Shirley**

## Bruckner

Mass No 3 (1893 edition)<sup>a</sup>. Psalm 146<sup>a</sup>.

Improvisation Sketches, 'Bad Ischl' (compl Erwin Horn)<sup>b</sup>. Andante in D minor<sup>b</sup>. Postlude in D minor<sup>b</sup>. Prelude and Fugue in C minor<sup>b</sup>. Fugue in D minor<sup>b</sup>. 'Perger' Prelude in C minor<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Ania Vegry sop <sup>a</sup>Franziska Gottwald contr

<sup>a</sup>Clemens Bieber ten <sup>a</sup>Timo Riihonen bass

<sup>a</sup>Munich Philharmonic Choir; Philharmonie Festiva / Gerd Schaller <sup>b</sup>org

Profil <sup>a</sup> PH16034 (117' • DDD • T)

<sup>a</sup>Recorded live on September 6, 2015 and <sup>b</sup>played on the organ of Ebrach Abbey, Bavaria

## Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (1894 original version)<sup>a</sup>.

Mass No 3 (1893 edition)<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Ruth Ziesak sop <sup>b</sup>Janina Baechle contr

<sup>b</sup>Benjamin Bruns ten <sup>b</sup>Günther Groissböck bass

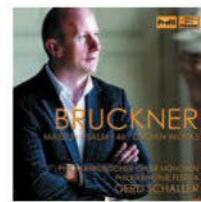
<sup>b</sup>Vienna Singakademie; ORF Vienna Radio

Symphony Orchestra / Cornelius Meister

Capriccio <sup>a</sup> <sup>a</sup> C5247 (124' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Vienna,

<sup>a</sup>April 26, 2013, <sup>b</sup>June 23, 2015



The seemingly endless flow of Bruckner symphony releases makes it easy to forget that some of the composer's most inspired music is found in his liturgical works. Here are two recordings of the Mass No 3 to help redress that balance. Of these, the performance by Gerd Schaller is quite exceptional, making a superb pendant to his recently completed cycle of the symphonies. The orchestral opening of the *Kyrie* immediately catches the ear with its depth of expression and seriousness of purpose, and the performance benefits throughout from the commitment and radiance of the choral singing. Schaller's tempo for the *Gloria* is slightly slower than

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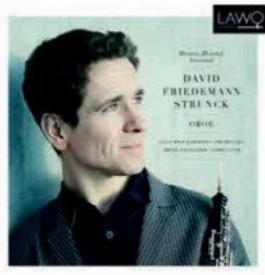


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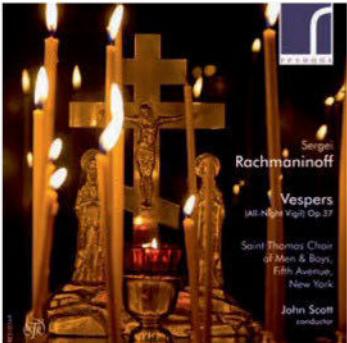
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Fifth Avenue, New York  
John Scott conductor

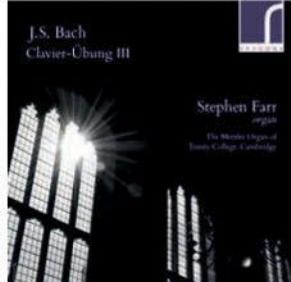
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and his magnificent choir  
capture the fervent writing  
in all its rich variety'  
The Observer



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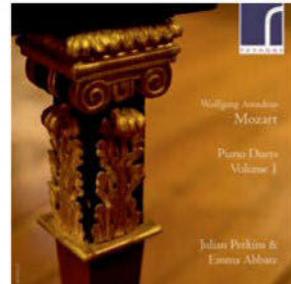


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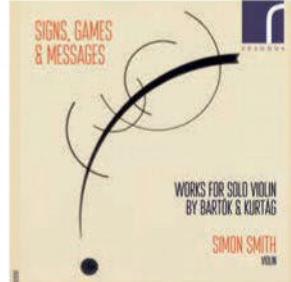
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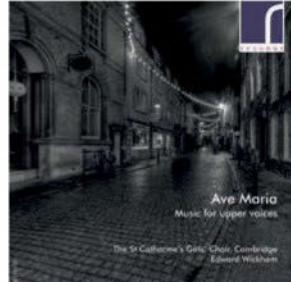
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Brahms	Vier ernste Gesänge	Goerne, Eschenbach £11.50
Bruckner	Mass No. 3, Psalm 146 (2cd)	Schaller £20.00
Liszt	Transcendental Studies (SACD)	Kirill Gerstein £12.50
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usual but the result has a Klemperer-like weight and impact, and the performance of the *Benedictus*, a movement which anticipates the great symphonic *adagios* to come, is ineffably moving. All four vocal soloists are on superlative form and the performances of the various instrumental solos, notably violin and viola in the *Credo* and oboe at the close of the *Agnus Dei*, leave nothing to be desired. The recording is as excellent as the performance.

Bruckner's reputation as a composer rests almost exclusively on the series of mature works that followed the completion of his studies with Otto Kitzler in 1863 at the age of 39. However, a considerable number of works exist from before this time, including Psalm 146, a 30-minute piece for soloists, double choir and orchestra that dates from no later than 1858. It's a markedly lyrical work with recognisable Brucknerian fingerprints and, as Peter Quantrill observed in his Specialist's Guide on Alleluias (3/16), a concluding fugue of remarkable invention and sophistication. Schaller's richly articulate performance is the first recording since Wolfgang Riedelbauch's pioneering account of 1972 (available from [klassichaus.us](http://klassichaus.us)) and is a valuable contribution to the Bruckner discography. Further rarities are provided in the form of five short organ pieces composed between 1843 and 1884, comprising almost the entirety of Bruckner's output for an instrument on which his performing skill was legendary. Although Bruckner's famous improvisations are lost to posterity, Schaller also includes an arrangement by the organist Erwin Horn of a three-page sketch Bruckner made for a performance in 1890. Based largely on the finale of the First Symphony, the sketch provides an idea of how one of Bruckner's organ improvisations might have sounded. Schaller's performances of these pieces, using the main organ of the Ebrach Monastery, are expertly delivered.

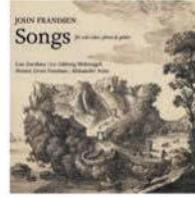
If not quite on the same level as Schaller's performance, Cornelius Meister's account of the Mass No 3 is well prepared and imaginatively paced. With dynamic markings scrupulously observed and disciplined choral singing, the work's quieter passages sound especially luminous. However, these benefits are negated by a recording that becomes congested in louder passages, blunting the impact of much of the *Gloria* and *Credo*. In addition, Meister's soloists, as fine as they are, do not communicate the same commitment as their counterparts on the Profil recording. Meister's coupling is a performance of Symphony No 9 in its traditional form

without the finale. Somewhat better recorded than the Mass, the performance is warmly expressive and spontaneous, although not especially heaven-storming.

Both sets have booklet-notes in English, although no translations of the texts are provided, which is disappointing in the case of the rarely heard Psalm 146. Despite this omission, the Profil set is an essential release for anyone interested in Bruckner's music. **Christian Hoskins**

## Frandsen

Lystens liturgi<sup>a</sup>. Winternächte<sup>b</sup>. Songs of Innocence<sup>c</sup>. Songs of Experience<sup>d</sup>. rummet, hvor jeg engang boede<sup>e</sup>. Seven Silly Songs<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>ad</sup>Lise Davidsen, <sup>c</sup>Liv Oddveig Midtmageli <sup>sops</sup>  
<sup>bf</sup>Morten Grove Frandsen <sup>counterten</sup>  
<sup>e</sup>Alexander Nohr <sup>bar</sup> <sup>a</sup>Sofia Wilkman,  
<sup>b</sup>Orsi Fajger <sup>pf</sup> <sup>cdf</sup>Jesper Sivebæk <sup>gtr</sup>  
 Dacapo (8 226582 (74' • DDD • T/t)



Musical polymath John Frandsen has notched up seven operas and a recent long-form Requiem, 'an eloquent statement' for Malcolm Riley (11/14). Not for Frandsen the 'gravy and grease' referred to by Carl Nielsen; these songs are notably direct in expression, even if Frandsen's wild forms often belie a harmonic language rooted in tradition.

That makes for a very Scandinavian seduction in *The Liturgy of Desire*. Frandsen's accompaniments, on both piano and guitar, can be fascinatingly contrary as in 'Knarren eines geknickten Astes' from the Hesse settings *Winternächte*, a sign of how he does things his own way. Nor does he toe any lines when it comes to what we might think of as naturally 'vocal'; his writing is full of odd leaps and angles.

For all Frandsen's elfin character, the most effective songs here have someone or something else in the corner of their eye: I hear the quasi-Elizabethan geometry of Britten's *Gloriana* in 'The Echoing Green' and a shapely nursery rhyme in 'The Lamb' – both from the Blake settings *Songs of Innocence*. Elsewhere, there can be a tendency to hammer away at a single, undeveloped idea.

As for talent, it's a mixed bag. If you've sought this disc out as the recording debut of future Wagnerian Lise Davidsen, you shouldn't be disappointed. She offers richness, depth, presence and character, particularly in the deeper Blake settings *Songs of Experience*, but can lack clarity up top and the in-your-ear subtlety of a mature Lieder singer. Alexander Nohr's baritone is

warm and embracing in some areas but inconsistent (he doesn't transfer from head to chest too smoothly in 'Tornerose' from the *rummet, hvor jeg engang boede* collection). Morten Grove Frandsen's countertenor has a sharp edge and loses control as it increases in altitude, but he shows endearing character in *Seven Silly Songs* and elsewhere. Liv Oddveig Midtmageli sings with clarity though with some squashed vowels, and handles Frandsen's angular challenges well. Fine accompaniments, particularly from Orsi Fajger. **Andrew Mellor**

## Henze

Being Beauteous<sup>a</sup>. Kammermusik 1958<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Anna Prohaska <sup>sop</sup> <sup>a</sup>Sophia Whitson <sup>harp</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Andreas Grünkorn <sup>vc</sup> <sup>a</sup>Fabian Diederichs <sup>vc</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Katharina Kühl <sup>vc</sup> <sup>a</sup>Valentin Preibus <sup>vc</sup>  
<sup>b</sup>Peter Gijsbertsen <sup>ten</sup> <sup>b</sup>Jürgen Ruck <sup>gtr</sup>  
<sup>b</sup>NDR Symphony Orchestra / <sup>ab</sup>Peter Ruzicka  
 Wergo (W) WER7334-2 (64' • DDD • T/t)



As with Britten, fresh recordings of Henze inevitably confront those the composer conducted personally, and this alluring and restrained *Being Beauteous* is no exception. In 1968 the soprano Edda Moser joined Henze for a heated, at times delirious reading, one so lush Andrew Porter was moved to write that, in the cantata itself, 'Henze's "Delius side" is to the fore' (12/68).

Whether praise or condemnation, that rings hollow hearing this new version, with Peter Ruzicka leading four cellists from the NDR Symphony, the harpist Sophia Whitson and Anna Prohaska. Prohaska's view of Arthur Rimbaud's prose poem is altogether cooler, more ethereal and reservedly sensual than Moser's, taking seriously the snowy setting of the *Beauteous* Being's violent metamorphosis. The result is enrapturing, otherworldly, her clean tone serene and her diction superb. Even if Henze drew more tonal variation from his cellists than Ruzicka, these are two equally worthwhile companion views of the piece.

It might seem odd that Wergo has come out with another *Kammermusik 1958*, barely three years after its first (2/13), but Ruzicka's is both stronger than and different to Jörg-Peter Mittmann's, being the first recording of a variant for string orchestra (plus clarinet, bassoon and horn soloists), rather than string quintet. The effect is to subtract a little of Henze's aching fragility and to add a more elegiac, embittered air, especially to the epilogue.

Peter Gijsbertsen sings Hölderlin's verse solidly, with a slight Pearsian woofle that recalls the tenor for whom Henze wrote, though Jürgen Ruck is too modest and unflashy in the guitar part intended for Julian Bream. Dig around on YouTube and two Henze versions – the world premiere and an out-of-print London Sinfonietta account – prove more atmospheric listens.

David Allen

## Muffat · Bertali · Biber · Schmelzer

Bertali Sonata a 13. Sonata Sancti Placidi

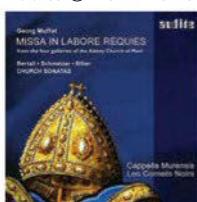
Biber Sonatas – VI; VIII Muffat Missa in

labore requies Schmelzer Sonata XII

Cappella Murensis; Les Cornets Noirs /

Johannes Strobl

Audite  AUDITE97 539 (71' • DDD)



Lucky Johannes Strobl! Director of music at the drippingly Baroque Abbey Church of Muri in Switzerland, with its two historic organs either side of altar, he has the resources to hone the spatial and tonal niceties of the Austrian polychoral repertoire currently best known to us today from works such as Biber's 53-part *Missa Salisburgensis*. Georg Muffat, a colleague of Biber's at Salzburg Cathedral from 1678 to 1690, is familiar mainly for his instrumental music but one sacred composition of his survives: the *Missa in labore requies* for five groupings of voices and instruments including trumpets, drums, cornets, sackbuts, organs and strings.

This is not its first recording but it is surely the most effective, as much as anything for its skilful use of the building; voices and instruments really do seem to come at you in waves from all directions – some from a distance, some from closer to – but regulated with such care that, rather than seeming like a dinning battle of the choirs, it is all satisfyingly of a piece. In short, this is a smoothly impressive performance of a beautifully crafted work, gentler than Biber and numbering among its highlights an impressive build-up in the 'Cum Sancto Spiritu' with sparingly used trumpet bursts, a glowing setting of 'Et homo factus' and, most striking of all, momentary muted trumpets and drum at 'passus et sepultus est'.

The Mass lasts 46 minutes and the disc is filled out with sonatas by some of Muffat's Austrian contemporaries. Bertali's are big and colourful, a pair of Biber string sonatas deliciously light and springy, and Schmelzer

delights with an unusual line-up of trumpets, trombones and high cornettini.

If you already like this kind of Habsburg Baroque, this is a disc you'll be wanting. If you've yet to fall for it, this could be the one to seduce you. **Lindsay Kemp**

## Rachmaninov

Sing not to me, beautiful maiden, Op 4 No 4. Six Songs, Op 8 – No 2, Child, thou art as beautiful as a flower; No 4, I fell in love, to my sorrow; No 5, The Dream. Six Songs, Op 38 – No 3, Daisies; No 4, The Rat-Catcher; No 6, A-oo! Twelve Songs, Op 14 – No 1, I wait for thee; No 2, The Isle; No 3, For long there has been little consolation in love; No 4, I was with her; No 6, How everyone loves thee; No 7, Believe me not, friend; No 8, Oh, do not grieve; No 9, She is as lovely as the noon; No 10, Before the icon; No 11, Spring Waters; No 12, 'Tis time. Twelve Songs, Op 21 – No 5, Lilacs; No 6, Loneliness. Fifteen Songs, Op 26 – No 7, To the Children; No 10, Before my window; No 12, Night is mournful; No 15, All things pass by

**Julia Sukmanova** sop **Elena Sukmanova** pf  
Hänssler Classic  HC16024 (58' • DDD)



First impressions are crucial. Opening with one of the most beautiful songs in the Russian repertoire, 'Sing not to me, beautiful maiden', soprano Julia Sukmanova sets the tone for what's to follow on this all-Rachmaninov disc. Clear diction and impassioned delivery cannot disguise major flaws with her voice. Intonation is a constant worry, particularly whenever she applies pressure to her upper register, and the closing lines – which should be floated airily – expose a nasty habit of swelling once she's located the note.

Sukmanova's recital mixes the familiar – 'Spring Waters', 'Lilacs' – with the lesser known. Eleven of the 12 Op 14 songs feature (No 5, 'These summer nights', is absent from the set) before a smattering from later sets. 'She is as lovely as the noon' (Op 14 No 9) comes off with a keen sense of Russian melancholy and 'The Rat-Catcher' (Op 38 No 4) contains lively characterisations, but her persistent vibrato and south-of-the-note intonation prevent much joy being derived. Sister Elena Sukmanova's alert accompaniments provide the disc's few highlights, the appealing piano sound warm and intimate.

Criminally, there are no song texts or translations, compounded by the fact that song titles are given (reasonably enough given the the label's provenance) in German, with English translations not

always those most commonly used. The title of Op 4 No 4 is given as 'O never sing to me again' – a cruelly apt sentiment.

If it's a soprano disc of Rachmaninov songs that particularly appeals, then Chandos's selection featuring Joan Rodgers (drawn from volumes featuring a handful of voices) is very lovely; or indulge yourself with the complete songs on a delicious three-disc set from Elisabeth Söderström and Vladimir Ashkenazy. **Mark Pullinger**

*Songs – selected comparisons:*

*Rodgers, Shelley (CHAN) CHAN9644*

*Söderström, Ashkenazy (DECC/LOND) 436 920-2LM3*

## Rachmaninov

Vespers, 'All-Night Vigil', Op 37

**Christine Jasper** contr **Dan Owers** ten

**London Symphony Chorus / Simon Halsey**

LSO Live  LSO0781 (53' • DDD/DSD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, November 26, 2014

## Rachmaninov

Vespers, 'All-Night Vigil', Op 37

**Ory Brown** mez **David Vanderwal** ten

**Saint Thomas Choir of Men & Boys**

**Fifth Avenue, New York / John Scott**

Resonus  RES10169 (58' • DDD • T/t)



Long gone are the days when Rachmaninov's *Vigil* was a rarity among Western choirs; it has assumed, rightly, the status not only of a choral classic, but of a masterpiece of choral writing that transcends rites, genres and languages. While the field is, indeed, now somewhat crowded, these new recordings are very welcome additions.

The London Symphony Chorus, under Simon Halsey, show not only evidence of great familiarity with the performing and recorded tradition of the work in terms of pacing and rhetoric, but also an injection of peculiarly British choral timbre, which brings a welcome and different perspective. There is, for example, a clear awareness of the Russian tradition behind the way the emphasis is accorded to the 'Alleluias' of the third movement, 'Blazhen muzh', just as there is in the way alto soloist Christine Jasper approaches the solo writing in the preceding movement, 'Blagoslovi, dushe moya'. In that same movement, however, the upper voices are characterised by a sound that is very far indeed from that of Russian choirs, and Slavic choirs in general, lighter in colour



The late John Scott conducts an exemplary recording of the Rachmaninov Vespers with the Saint Thomas Choir, released on Resonus

and, at times, suggestive of boy trebles. The men do achieve a darker sound, essential in this work – of fundamental importance, indeed – in several of the moments, not least the ‘Nine otpushchayeshi’, with the famous low B flat for the basses that even shocked the work’s first conductor, Danilin, when he saw the score. Here Dan Owers makes a fine job of the solo tenor part, but I feel that the pace is a little faster than is ideal, though in general speeds are very well judged indeed.

Tuning throughout is superb, as it needs to be with the kind of octave duplication so characteristic of Rachmaninov’s ‘choral orchestration’. Only one element in this fine recording needed more work, and that is pronunciation: vowels are consistently English-inflected, and there is little sign of the dark Russian ‘l’.

The recording by the Saint Thomas Choir, under the much-missed John Scott, is, predictably, completely different. The only other comparable version, of an entirely male choir with boy trebles, is that of King’s College, Cambridge, recorded in under Stephen Cleobury in 1999 (EMI/Warner, 4/99), though the sound of the two choirs is quite different, principally because of the brightness of the King’s trebles; the Americans have a rather smoother, more rounded timbre.

Unlike Halsey, Scott includes the opening blessing, to which the choir’s ‘Amin’ and subsequent invocation are a response. These are followed by a rendition of ‘Blagoslov, dushe moy’ that is daringly slow; Scott knew the capabilities of his singers, however, and it works superbly, with Ory Brown the excellent soloist. ‘Blazhen muzh’ really shows the choir at its most Anglican-sounding, so to speak, in that the countertenors have a particularly important role here, the trebles appearing for the refrains; ‘Blagosloven yesi, Gospodi’ and the opening of the ‘Nine otpushchayeshi’ also show the countertenors off particularly well, though the rocking motion of the rhythmic groupings in the latter is phrased in slightly too exaggerated a fashion, and soloist David Vanderwal also overdoes the portamento for my taste. The basses, reinforced by the extraordinary Glenn Miller, cope more than creditably with the passage down to the low B flat, though Halsey’s team is just as convincing. Memorable passages from elsewhere in the recording include a slow-paced, blazing rendition of ‘Slava v vyshniakh Bogu’, a truly incandescent yet taut ‘Khvalite imya Gospodne’ and a beautifully poised ‘Velichit dusha moy’ in which the basses are particularly outstanding.

The recording, made in Saint Thomas’s in 2008, is as clear as a bell, every detail audible, and the detailed notes are by Scott

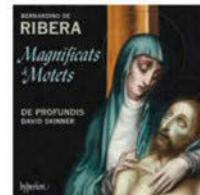
himself. It is a magnificent rendition, showing just how this masterpiece has been convincingly absorbed into the wider choral tradition, and I recommend it very highly indeed. **Ivan Moody**

## Ribera

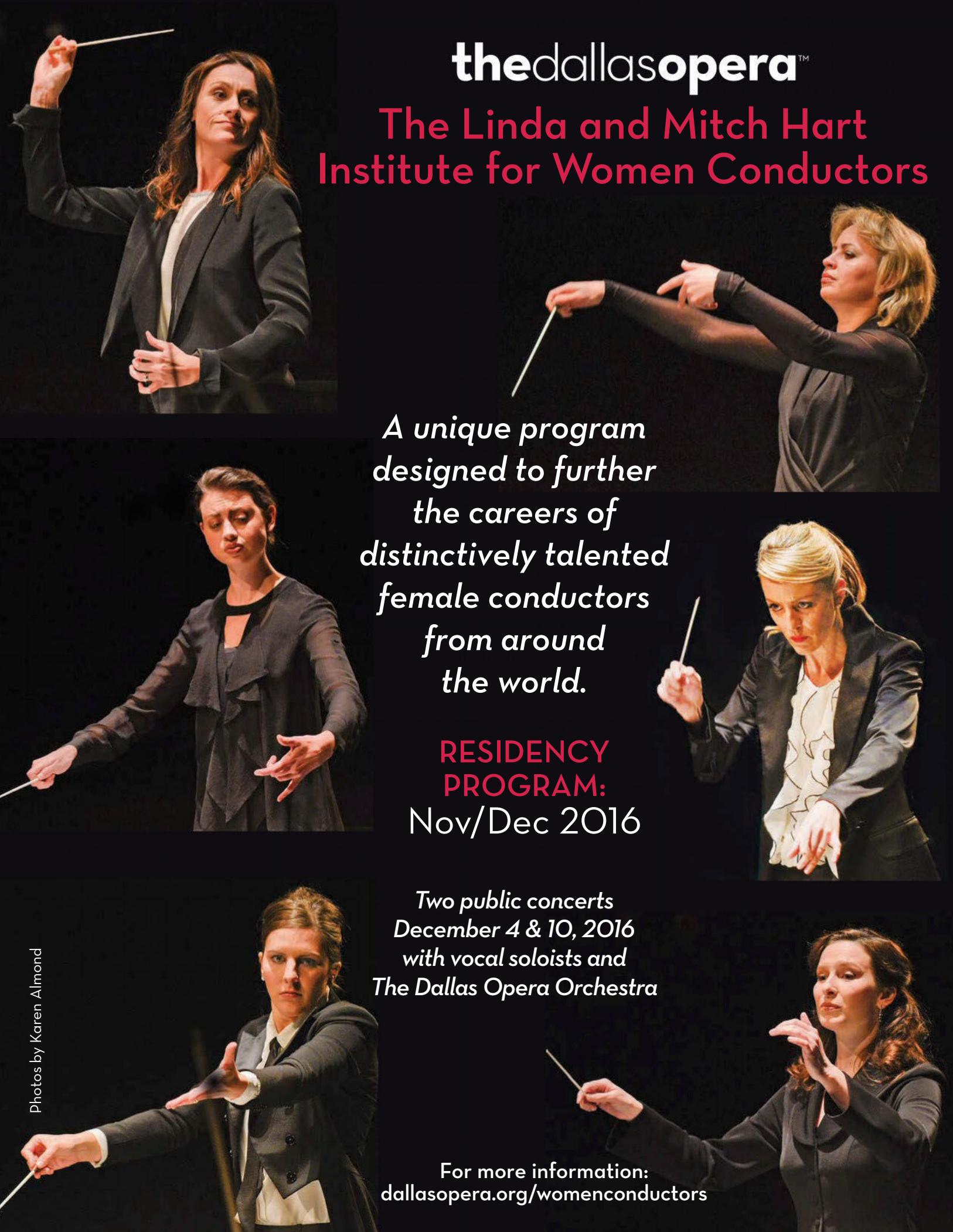
Rex autem David. Gloriosae virginis Mariae. Beata mater. Dimitte me ergo. Magnificats - Primus tonus I; Secundus tonus I; Quartus tonus II. Vox in Rama. Regina caeli. Virgo prudentissima. Conserva me, Domine. Assumpsit Jesus Petrum. Hodie completi sunt dies Pentecostes

**De Profundis / David Skinner**

Hyperion © CDA68141 (77' • DDD • T/t)



Bernardino de Ribera (c1520-1580) is perhaps best known as the early mentor of Victoria, who he taught during his stint as choirmaster at Ávila. Little of his own music survives, but this recording presents a substantial proportion of what does, much of it preserved in a choirbook copied at Toledo after the musician had moved there from Ávila. Devoted to Ribera’s works alone, the source was subsequently so wilfully damaged that a substantial proportion of its contents is lost or has necessitated reconstruction. This



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The tenor Robert Murray records *Die schöne Müllerin*, with Andrew West at the piano, for Stone Records

labour of love, and the championing of Ribera's cause generally, was undertaken by one of the pre-eminent scholars of Iberian music, Bruno Turner, who gives a touching account of it in the booklet-notes to this CD.

As Turner himself admits, there's not enough variety in what survives to claim Ribera as a top-flight composer, but his music is well made in the best sense, and while much of it may be reminiscent of other composers it is not merely derivative. The lament motets *Vox in Rama* and *Rex autem David* are worth singling out, and the three surviving *Magnificat* settings (part of a much larger set) are resourceful within a purposefully narrow stylistic range. Led by David Skinner and two-dozen strong, De Profundis sound robust and solemn rather than mournful, their all-male line-up a welcome change from today's treble-dominated norm in larger ensembles. While the music gives little scope for versatility, these solid, well-judged performances elevate Ribera from a mere footnote in music history to something more substantial. Victoria, perhaps, might be proud of his early master. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Schubert

Die schöne Müllerin, D795

**Robert Murray** ten **Andrew West** pf

Stone Records Ⓜ 5060192 780628 (64' • DDD • T/t)



This *Schöne Müllerin* brings Stone Records' excellent series of the Schubert song-cycles to a conclusion in style. Unlike the previous instalments, though, entrusted to the bass Matthew Rose, here we're in the hands of a tenor, Robert Murray. He offers a clear-sighted and straightforwardly touching account. His is a light, cleanly produced voice with a narrow bore, which also takes on hints of a heroic steel; the downside is a slight tightness and lack of timbral variation.

It's a well focused sound, though, and a voice under total technical control. And Murray's intelligence shines through across the complete cycle, with clever interpretative touches in the strophic songs (listen to the appropriate injection of impatience into the final verse of 'Ungeduld') and elsewhere – the telling little push he gives on 'Klingen' at the start of 'Danksagung an den Bach', for example.

Murray's German is natural and idiomatic, the words sitting unobtrusively on phrases that are beautifully turned, matched by a control of dynamics that emphasises the sheer melodic beauty of many of the slower numbers: you have to go some way to find

more musically satisfying performances of 'Trockne Blumen' or 'Der Müller und der Bach', even if they and the final song don't communicate quite as much quiet tragedy as they can do. He's also little less persuasive in the more forceful and rhetorical songs, where one notices too that Andrew West, for all his sensitivity and musicality, is not as lively and imaginative a presence on the piano stool as some are in this cycle – Graham Johnson on Ian Bostridge's early Hyperion recording, for example.

But none of that prevents this from being a beguiling performance, one delighting in the cycle's melodic pleasures and Schubertian grace. **Hugo Shirley**

*Selected comparisons:*

*Bostridge, Johnson (4/96) (HYPE) CDA30020*

## Schubert

Winterreise, D911

**Dimitris Tiliakos** bar **Vassilis Varvaresos** pf

Navis Ⓜ NC16008 (76' • DDD • T)



Spontaneous scribblings made in the course of *Gramophone* listening are usually best kept to oneself. Yet, glib as it might sound, 'Better at detached



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philosophising than human tenderness' still seems a fair summary of this *Winterreise* from two young Greek artists hitherto unknown to me. This is a bleak, stark existential journey, with Dimitris Tiliakos's clean, slightly dry timbre complemented by the bare, sometimes aptly desiccated textures conjured up by his excellent pianist. From the opening 'Gute Nacht', taken at a slow trudge, Tiliakos's wanderer exudes resigned weariness. There are momentary shows of stoical defiance; but the cumulative effect is of a man who no longer belongs to this world, ending with the trance-like impassivity of the two final songs (in the booklet Tiliakos talks of the wanderer's 'reconciliation with the impending end').

The steadiness and control of Tiliakos's soft singing are heard to particularly touching effect in 'Wasserflut' (sung in a bleached, traumatised tone), 'Irrlicht', with its haunting *mezza voce* ending, and an oppressive, rhythmically implacable 'Rast'. His diction is invariably clear; and throughout he avoids the slightest hint of sentimentality. What I miss here – and these things are notoriously subjective – are shards of warmth, human pathos, *echt* Romantic *Sehnsucht* for an irrevocably blighted past. I hear no ache in the tone in the major-key final verse of 'Gute Nacht', no ardour in 'Erstarrung' (where Tiliakos tends to shout at *forte*). 'Der Lindenbaum' and the final, *langsam* sections of 'Frühlingstraum' sound wan rather than yearning. Minor-major contrasts play a crucial colouristic and psychological role in the cycle, not least in the pivotal 'Der Wegweiser'. Tiliakos seems to minimise or ignore them, at a cost of pathos and human feeling.

I'm glad to have made this winter journey. But among the legions of baritones who have recorded *Winterreise*, Matthias Goerne, Thomas Quasthoff, Gerald Finley and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (1960s and '70s vintage) all have more lyrically alluring voices and draw me more deeply into the wanderer's plight. If you do investigate, be warned that the texts are in German and Greek only, and that the booklet interview with singer and pianist combines personal insights with a fair amount of guff ('...Schubert wrote his last works on his deathbed...'). **Richard Wigmore**

### 'Bach and the stile antico'

**JS Bach** Aus tiefer Not, BWV686. Credo in unum Deum, BWV1081. Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist, BWV671. Mass, BWV232 – Symbolum Nicenum (Credo) **Bassani** Acroama Missale – No 5, Credo in unum Deum **Caldara/JS Bach** Suscepit Israel, BWV1082 **Palestrina** Missa Sine nomine – Kyrie; Gloria

**St Salvator's Chapel Choir; Ars Eloquentiae; Fitzwilliam Quartet / Tom Wilkinson org**  
Sanctiandree (SAND0003 (62' • DDD • T/t)



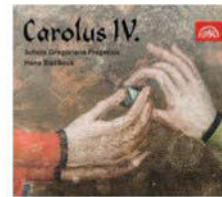
It seems obvious to point out Bach was a profoundly gifted contrapuntist, but this programme by St Salvator's Chapel Choir of the University of St Andrew's is an intelligent exploration of the direct connections between Bach's music drawing on the *stile antico* (ie Renaissance-style polyphonic invention) and works by other composers that he copied, arranged and performed.

In c1735 Bach and an assistant copied out six Masses by Giovanni Battista Bassani, and the *Credo* from the fifth of these is performed here with Bach's own brief introduction for choir and basso continuo (BWV1081); Bassani's music takes over at 'Patre omnipotentem' and is an attractive *concertato* movement in which modest solo-voice phrases and contrapuntal choral passages converse amiably with strings and continuo played expertly by Ars Eloquentiae (string sections are led by the Fitzwilliam Quartet). The choir achieves a particularly refined balance between polyphonic lines in 'Suscepit Israel' from a *Magnificat* setting by Caldara (with Bach's added violin parts). Tom Wilkinson's performance of the organ prelude on *Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist* (BWV671) serves as a grand introduction to the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* from Palestrina's *Missa Sine nomine*, which was copied and arranged by Bach c1742. But his adaptations are not observed here, the polished St Salvator's Chapel Choir giving an *a cappella* reading instead.

The programme concludes with the complete *Credo* from the Mass in B minor (solo parts taken by talented students). The astonishing fugue in 'Confiteor' is perhaps Bach's last original composition for the Mass that draws on *stile antico* techniques in juxtaposition to the modern movements such as the Pergolesi-influenced 'Et incarnatus est' – and the integration of these assorted stylistic influences is realised transparently in this unaffected and lovely performance. **David Vickers**

### 'Carolus IV: Rex et Imperator'

Music from the cathedral, university and street in 14th-century Prague  
**Hana Blažíková sop** Jakub Kydliček, **Monika Reslerová recs** Jakub Eben **perc** Schola Gregoriana **Pragensis/ David Eben**  
Supraphon (SU4193-2 (69' • DDD • T/t)



The Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (reigned 1356-78) was one of the most cultured rulers of his time, his mark on the art and architecture of his imperial seat, Prague, still visible today. His patronage of music is less easy to pin down: although Machaut served for a time as secretary to Charles's father and Prague was a hub of dissemination of the *Ars Nova* style, recent years have brought to light much information on specific indigenous traits in both plainsong and polyphony, much of which finds its way on to this distinctive recital, a musical evocation of Charles's reign and legacy.

A substantial proportion of the programme consists of monophony of various sorts, both sacred (hymns, sequences, antiphons, responsories) and secular (the selections in German and Czech, to my mind the highlights of the recital). The treatment of rhythm is plastic and flexible, partly a result of indications within the sources themselves (particularly as regards the secular repertory). Vocal delivery is uniformly placid, characterful and yet soft-centred, even in the polyphonic selections (the anonymous *Je languis* and Machaut's *Dame je sui cilz* reminiscent of Gothic Voices' interpretations). This uniformity is perhaps the recital's only shortcoming: with so many different styles and functions on offer, a greater range of tone, colour and ornamentation might have suggested itself. Instrumental participation is sparing and, in the main, well judged.

Finally, the presentation is beautiful, with illustrations from the famous wall paintings of Charles's castle at Karlstein. Incidentally, this ensemble's past discography bears eloquent witness to Prague's special place in medieval European cultural history and is well worth discovering. **Fabrice Fitch**

### 'Come all ye songsters'

**Anonymous** Minuet **Corbetta** Passacaille **Draghi** An Italian Ground **Purcell** The cares of lovers. Come all ye songsters. A dance of fairies. Fairest isle. Fly swift, ye hours. From rosy bow'rs. Hark! The echoing air. I attempt from love's sickness to fly. If love's a sweet passion. I see she flies me. Let the dreadful engines of eternal will. Lucinda is bewitching fair. Mystery. Not all my torments. Pious Celinda goes to prayers. Sing while we trip it. 'Tis nature's voice. What a sad fate is mine. Ye gentle spirits of the air. Harpsichord Suite No 5 **Simpson** Divisions on a Ground

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## VOCAL VARIATIONS

**Tim Ashley** listens to some recent releases of lieder, song and vocal ensembles



The pianist Joseph Middleton is the presiding spirit over two new discs of vocal music

**O**n the first of four recitals from Capriccio that form the basis of this round-up, all with Charles Spencer as accompanist, **Anne Schwanewilms** offers a programme of songs by Schubert, Schreker and Korngold that tackles complex themes of transience, disappointment and regret in the pursuit of elusive ideals of beauty. The title comes from the yearning first line ('Schöne Welt, wo bist du?') of Schubert's 'Die Götter Griechenlands', with which the disc opens and the mood is predominantly elegiac. It arouses mixed feelings, however. Schwanewilms's distinctive tone – a mixture of silk, steel and acid – and her fondness for sustained, shaded *pianissimos* produce startling effects in Schubert's 'Schwestergruss'. 'Der Tod und das Mädchen' reveals a rich lower register that I, for once, hadn't realised she possessed, and her sweeping, grandly phrased way with Korngold's Op 5 Lieder and Schreker's Op 22 set impresses despite an occasional hardness of edge in her

upper registers. But there are moments of unsteadiness near the start and her diction can be muddy, with consonants sometimes dropped in a quest for even tone or dynamic control. Schubert's 'Ellens Gesänge', with which she closes, are good, but not as good as Gundula Janowitz with Irwin Gage (DG, 11/77).

Austrian soprano **Cornelia Hübsch**, in the first of two recitals in Capriccio's 'Première Portraits' series, proves a finer wordsmith, which is perhaps just as well, since the booklet offers neither texts nor translations, nor, indeed, anything about the music itself. Like Schwanewilms, she essays Korngold – the brooding 1933 cycle *Unvergänglichkeit*, this time – though the bulk of the disc is given over to three big sets of songs by Karl Goldmark, written between 1868 and 1880: many of them are folk-inflected, as one might expect from the composer of the *Rustic Wedding Symphony*, and the debt to Brahms is more than once apparent. Hübsch's silvery tone can turn shrill at the

top under pressure and the recording is oddly reverberant, but she's a consistently engaging performer, nicely alert to the nuances of line and text. It's a disc of great charm.

Its companion 'Première Portrait', from the Italian tenor **Emanuele d'Aguanno**, is less distinguished. Songs by Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini form his programme. The voice itself is grainy, the tone occasionally harsh. High notes ring strongly, but if approached from below can be aspirated, fracturing the words ('vi-hi-ver', for example). Declamatory Donizetti suits him best – he rises impressively to the histrionic challenges of 'È morta' – and a selection from Rossini's *Soirées musicales* makes up in wit for what it lacks in finesse. But the Bellini songs – many of them sketches for familiar arias from the operas – can be graceless, the lines inelegant, the fioritura at times imprecise.

The best of the new Capriccio recitals comes from the smoky-voiced German-American mezzo **Stephanie Houtzel**, new to me, and a real find on this showing. Her programme ingeniously mixes Mahler and Ives with a clutch of Argentinian composers including Ginastera, Guastavino and Piazzolla, and the emphasis consequently falls on the intersection between popular or traditional music and classical song. Not everyone will care for her dramatic, near-expressionist way with Mahler, which flies very much in the face of the introverted dignity favoured by most interpreters. But her Ives is beautifully judged – 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' is deeply touching – and the Argentinian songs are done with a depth of sensual feeling that is utterly beguiling. Spencer, an accompanist of choice for so many singers, is at his most persuasive here, too.

Pianist Joseph Middleton, meanwhile, is the presiding spirit over what are effectively complementary releases from Champs Hill and Signum, both with night as their theme. **Ruby Hughes**'s 'Nocturnal Variations' presents a moody, exquisitely realised programme of familiar Schubert and Mahler alongside comparative rarities by Berg (the Op 2 *Gesänge*) and Britten (the songs from Ronald Duncan's 1945 masque *The Way to the Tomb* and the

Thomas Moore setting 'At the mid hour of night'). Hughes's voice is ravishing, her interpretations wonderfully fresh, and there's a real sense of give and take between herself and Middleton. Her 'Im Abendrot', rapt and introverted, makes Schwanewilms's performance on 'Schöne Welt...' seem mundane in comparison. Berg's *Gesänge*, in which tonality gradually collapses, are genuinely disturbing, and there's an exceptional performance of 'Um Mitternacht' in which Hughes's dynamic control, from the whispered opening to the blaze of glory at the close, is breathtaking.

The members of Middleton's **Myrthen Ensemble**, meanwhile – Mary Bevan, Clara Mouriz, Allan Clayton and Marcus Farnsworth – add duets, part-songs and ensembles to the mix in their two-CD set 'Songs to the Moon'. The four voices blend beautifully in quartets by Brahms. There are rare outings for Duparc's 'La fuite' from Farnsworth and Mouriz, and for Gounod's delicious 'Rêvons, c'est l'heure' from Mouriz and Bevan. The solo songs find Clayton at his most fervent in Warlock's 'To the Night', and Farnsworth sounding impishly sexy in Schumann's 'Zwei venetianische Lieder'. Best of all, though, is Bevan singing Elisabeth Maconchy's 'Sun, Moon and Stars', a mystic, high-lying setting of Thomas Traherne, her voice ascending into the stratosphere with rapturous ease. On both releases, Middleton is outstanding, his reputation as a rising star among accompanists richly deserved. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**Various Cpsrs** 'Schöne Welt...'  
Schwanewilms, Spencer  
Capriccio  C5233



**Goldmark. Korngold** Songs  
Hübsch, Spencer  
Capriccio  C3004



**Various Cpsrs** Italian Songs  
d'Aguanno, Spencer  
Capriccio  C3005



**Various Cpsrs** 'Nostalgia'  
Houtzeel, Spencer  
Capriccio  C5262



**Various Cpsrs** 'Nocturnal Variations'  
Hughes, Middleton  
Champs Hill  CHRCD098



**Various Cpsrs** 'Songs to the Moon'  
Myrthen Ens  
Signum  SIGCD443

**Carolyn Sampson** sop **Elizabeth Kenny** lute  
**Jonathan Manson** bass viol  
**Laurence Cummings** hpd  
Wigmore Hall Live  WHLIVE0083 (78' • DDD • T)  
Recorded live, March 17, 2015



Cast your eye down the list of artists on Wigmore Live's latest release and it tells you pretty much all you need to know about the contents. A Baroque supergroup, comprising Elizabeth Kenny, Jonathan Manson and Laurence Cummings, join soprano Carolyn Sampson for a Purcell programme and the results are as glorious as you'd imagine.

What could be just another lovely solo recital is subtly but determinedly refocused here as an ensemble affair. Each of the musicians gets a chance to step into the spotlight, and the result is both a more interesting and a much more satisfying listen than a straight sequence of arias with the obligatory mid-programme instrumental breath-catcher.

Whether it's Manson's easy virtuosity in Christopher Simpson's *Divisions on a Ground*, Cummings's delicate ornamentation in Purcell's Harpsichord Suite No 5 in C or the instinctive musicality of Kenny's sequence of lute pieces, it all adds up to a sense of dialogue. It's a dialogue that spills over into the songs themselves, with the instrumentalists very present and forward in the recorded balance for the opening sequence of movements from *The Fairy Queen*. It's the instruments that help ignite the explosive Lombardic rhythms and help to articulate the shifting musical moods of 'Ye gentle spirits'.

But it's Sampson whose flexible voice (expanding from near-white simplicity in 'Fairest isle' to heightened dramatic scope for 'Not all my torments' or 'I see she flies me') keeps us listening through an inevitably fragmented sequence of short works. Two larger-scale songs – 'From rosy bow'rs' and 'Let the dreadful engines of eternal will' – anchor the programme and give her greatest vocal scope, shaping Purcell's arioso-style writing with care and a sense of structural balance and pacing.

Any recording of Purcell songs enters a crowded market but Sampson makes a strong case for her contribution, with just a little help from some starry musical friends.

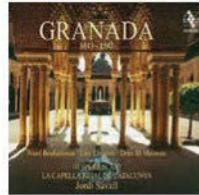
**Alexandra Coglan**

### 'Granada 1013-1502'

**Lior Elmaleh** singr **Waad Bouhassoun, Driss El Maloumi** sgrs/oud **La Capella Reial de Catalunya**;

### Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall

Alia Vox  AVSA9915 (79' • DDD/DSD • T/T)



The indefatigable Jordi Savall continues to unite musicians from East and West as he traverses five centuries of musical traditions in Granada, a city he describes as 'one of the most important and admired cities in Muslim Andalusia'. The majority of performances on this new album were recorded live in 2013 at a concert in the Alhambra Palace to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Granada's foundation.

Arranged in chronological order from the foundation of Granada in the Zirid period to the Castilian rule when Muslims were forced to convert to Catholicism, the programme begins with rejoicing – the invocation *qamti be-Ishon Layla* (Song of Songs) – and ends with an Andalusian lament *Maqam hijaz* (Ibn Zaydun) sung by Lior Elmaleh. The celebration of musical interconnectedness is manifest in the smoothness of Savall's programme and its execution. Take, for instance, the sonorous choral Preces: *Penitentes orate*, an 11th century Mozarabic prayer smoothly sung by La Capella Reial de Catalunya. This is Christian prayer under Islamic rule. Yet as El Cid conquers Valencia, so Savall's improvisatory introduction to a Ductia (*Cantigas de Santa Maria*) provides the perfect segue – a teardrop gesture gradually gaining dance rhythms – into a wonderful array of instrumental colour.

Laments remind us that despite moments of peaceful coexistence, the struggle for lasting peace is ongoing. Heart-rending moments of beauty abound such as Manuel Forcano's (director, Institute Ramon Llull) recitation concerning the forced conversion of the Jews in 1148. Again this is framed by dance – a Morisque – only to be followed by a lament on the death of King Sancho III of Castile, *Plange Castella misera*, movingly sung by Marc Mauillon. Towards the end of the programme Savall returns to the joyful Villancico *Viva el Gran Re Don Fernando* previously featured on his 'Dinastia Borgia' album (Alia Vox, 2/11). He retains the grandiose opening instrumental verse, but this Granada performance is statelier, with lightly etched rhythms. It lacks the hysterical element of David Munrow's classic 1972 HMV release 'Music for Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain' (Testament, 5/73) invoking instead a courtly, cautious rejoicing. **Edward Breen**

# REISSUES

**Bryce Morrison** on two great pianists of our time in three fine reissue box-sets

## Simply the best

**S**uperficially Martha Argerich and Maria João Pires are opposites, the one associated with volatility, the other with a more classically sculpted reserve. Yet to say this is an insult to Argerich's lyrical introspection, as remarkable as her incandescence, while Pires's control is backed by fervour and finesse. Both artists share a love of chamber music, both are uncomfortable with public exposure, both happier in the relative calm of the studio.

Yet how extraordinary that Argerich's flame-throwing temperament can be accommodated on disc. From the start, when as a young girl she entered the studio demanding plentiful black coffee and cigarettes and gave a performance of Chopin's A flat Polonaise, she left her recording team reeling. Her trajectory was clear; these were the days when Horowitz listened in astonishment to her recording of the Prokofiev Toccata.

Not surprisingly Argerich's ascent to her unique status was often fraught. But listening to her Chopin, gathered in a five-CD set, is a reminder of her ability to transcend sudden fears and uncertainties. Here, in super-abundance, is all of her fantasy and freedom, much of it like blazing sunlight. Her G minor Ballade will make even the most sanguine listener's heart beat dangerously fast, while her mercurial way in her selection of Mazurkas captures all of their elusive magic. What fluidity, ease and confidentiality in the opening page of the F major Nocturne before the unleashing of its central storm, how improvisatory in the E flat Nocturne, Op 55 as opposed to, say Pogorelich's near Wagnerian distortion. Her fire-storm, or primal scream, in the B flat minor Prelude (No 16) is the fiercest of all virtuoso displays but her unfaltering poise in the central Elysium of the Funeral March from the Op 35 Sonata is hardly less remarkable. The nightmare finale from the same Sonata emerges through an eerie mist of half pedalling, yet another example of Argerich's originality. As happy in moonlit reverie (the E minor Piano Concerto's central *Larghetto*) as in wild accelerations



elsewhere – like so much suddenly applied centrifugal force – she takes one to the edge; only occasionally, like Icarus, does she fly too close to the sun.

Argerich's Barcarolle is a journey from an already unsettled Venetian lagoon to a rough open sea, and her over-reaching in her live performance of the Third Sonata, makes her studio performance preferable. Whether at her finest, or in her rare lapses, her playing is not for the faint-hearted. Again, her capacity to play music she has performed countless times (notably, the Schumann Concerto) bemuses and unsettles her more conservative listeners. Anxious to pin her down they find she walks away with the pin.

Away from Chopin on DG and on to Sony Classical, we are given a Richard Strauss *Burleske* of scintillating bravura, and a partnerships with James Galway and Ivry Gitlis in the Franck Sonata as subtle and inward as it is intense. My late colleague Joan Chissell may have termed Argerich 'the fire-brand of pianists'; but such a description is limiting when you consider how, in the finale of the Schumann Fantasie, her playing is, indeed, like 'so much rapidly shifting sunset vapour'. Few pianists have ever captured more vividly Schumann's schizophrenic romanticism, the music of a composer who claimed with tragic prophecy, 'sometimes I think I could sing myself to death'.

And so to Maria João Pires, a pianist born for chamber music (although she is no less distinguished as a soloist) time and again suggesting that this is arguably the richest of all musical forms or fields. In the Beethoven piano and violin sonatas, from early exuberance to the other-

worldly trance of the final Sonata, Op 96, she proves herself the ideal 'listening' pianist, alert to every nuance from her regular partner Augustin Dumay. Balance throughout is gloriously exact. In the Brahms sonatas there is passion and integrity far distant from the relative exhibitionism of Milstein and Horowitz (the D minor Sonata). There is an unsullied purity about Pires's playing, though her feel for both Franck's and Grieg's turbulent romanticism is no less memorable. Listen to the opening of Grieg's C minor Sonata where she suggests a northern light playing across the composer's lyricism, or the way she recreates the finale's ring of sleighbells. Her Debussy Sonata makes you long to hear her in Fauré, Poulenc and Ravel while in her live Wigmore Hall recital with cellist Antonio Meneses she takes the spotlight – no doubt reluctantly – giving a performance of Brahms Op 117 Intermezzi of a surpassing intimacy and refinement. Finest of all, the two Brahms Trios where all possible opacity is resolved in playing of a crystalline brilliance and fervour.

My advice to possible purchasers is to save your pennies and buy all three boxes. These are among the finest of all reissues.

**Bryce Morrison**

### THE RECORDINGS

#### **Martha Argerich: Complete Chopin Recordings**

DG ⑤ 479 6068

#### **Martha Argerich: The Complete Sony Classical Recordings**

Sony Classical ⑤ 8898 532035-2

#### **Maria João Pires: Complete Chamber Music Recordings**

DG ② 479 5964

# PLAYLISTS

Explore angst-ridden suicidal scenes and the calmer tones of the Baroque flute

## *Suicide in opera*

### Soprano Anna Prohaska highlights 10 arias sung by characters in extremis

Suicide often marks the end of an existence worn down by years of depression. Music theatre has exploited the more glamorous, dramatic side of this tragic act, often bending time and stretching a character's vital force beyond reality. It has long fascinated me; the laments accompanying, say, Dido's self-immolation form the subdued epicentre of a performance.

In Handel's opera, Cleopatra never follows through with her suicide so as to adhere to contemporary theatre convention. Historically, though, Cleopatra VII *did* take her own life – and thus the aria has a thrusting, relentless, foreboding quality suggesting the inevitability of death.

We remain in the ancient past, as Emperor Nero forces Seneca to commit suicide by his mistress Poppea's orders. Her temporarily satisfied hunger for power moves her to this erotically charged aria.

Imprisoned Pamina firmly decides to kill herself but is interrupted by the Three Boys persuading the desperate soul to embrace life through innocence – it is one of the most gripping ensembles in opera.

Werther's notorious suicide based on Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* epistolary novel moved more than one generation of young men to wallow in unfulfilled love.

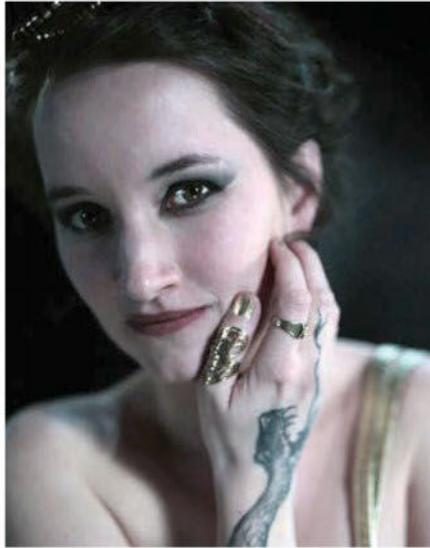
Wozzeck and Kat'a Kabanová, caught up in the constraints of their social class and having suffered abuse through their superiors, ultimately kill themselves.

The Carmelites in Jacobin France were guillotined by state orders – yet, as an act of martyrdom, renegade nun Blanche returns voluntarily to join her sisters in death.

Madama Butterfly's tale of exploitation by an American officer ends when, on being told her son will be taken away, commits harakiri. Even a warrior goddess cannot escape betrayal and rape – Brünnhilde has a funeral pyre built and sacrifices herself.

*Anna Prohaska's 'Serpent and Fire' recording on Alpha is out in September*

- **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – 'When I am laid in earth' (Dido's Lament) Janet Baker *mez* ECO / Lewis Decca
- **Handel** Giulio Cesare – 'Se pietà di me non senti' Sandrine Piau *sop* Les Talens Lyriques / Rousset **Naïve**



Anna Prohaska: drawn to the 'stretching of reality'

- **Monteverdi** L'incoronazione di Poppea – 'Or che Seneca è morto' Sylvia McNair *sop* EBS / Gardiner Archiv Produktion
- **Mozart** Die Zauberflöte – 'Du also bist mein Bräutigam' Ruth Ziesak *sop* VPO / Solti Decca
- **Massenet** Werther, Act 4 scene 2 Nicolai Gedda *ten* Victoria de los Angeles *sop* Orch de Paris / Prêtre Warner Classics
- **Berg** Wozzeck – 'Das Messer? Wo ist das Messer?' Franz Grundheber *bar* VPO / Abbado DG
- **Janáček** Kát'a Kabanová – 'Ptácci prileti na mohylu' Elisabeth Söderström *sop* VPO / Mackerras Decca
- **Poulenc** Dialogues des Carmélites – 'Salve regina' Lyon Opera Chorus and Orchestra / Nagano Virgin Classics
- **Puccini** Madama Butterfly – 'Con onor muore' Maria Callas *sop* Philharmonia / Serafin Warner Classics
- **Wagner**: Götterdämmerung – Immolation Scene Birgit Nilsson *sop* VPO / Solti Decca

## *The Baroque flute*

### Nathaniel Gore explores the varying tone of the flute as the instrument evolved

The flute repertoire went through its greatest mutations in the Baroque period. From a minor instrument exclusively used in small-scale chamber music it became an integral part of the orchestra as we know it today. Its popularity began in France at the very beginning of the 18th century,

with the publication of Hotteterre's *Pièces pour la flûte traversière* which are often considered the solemn opening of the repertoire. Duets were a particularly popular format at the time, allowing the instruments to search for a pleasing sonority as the two parts intertwine.

As the flute spread across Europe, composers began experimenting with the possibilities of its tone and register, often adding it to the typical string orchestra as an equal part or as a soloist. Vivaldi used it for his highly descriptive *La tempesta di mare* and Bach called on the instrument's uppermost register in his challenging Cantata No 8 to suggest the chiming of bells. Solo works for the flute like JS Bach's Partita, and his son CPE's response to it in the same key, are also a pleasure to play and listen to as they enable a real appreciation of the rich yet soft woody tone of the instrument that we rarely hear today.

- **Hotteterre** Pièces pour la flûte traversière avec la basse Barthold Kuijken *fl* Wieland Kuijken *vc* Robert Kohnen *hps* Accent
- **Blavet** Recueil de pieces II - I. Prelude de Mr Blavet Frank Theuns *fl* Marc Hantaï *fl* Accent
- **Boismortier** Concerto for 5 Flutes in A minor, Op 15 No 2 B Kuijken, M Hantaï, F Theuns, S Saitta, D Etienne *fls* Accent
- **Handel** Halle Sonata for Flute No 2 in E minor, HWV375 Patrick Beuckels *fl* Ricercar Consort Ricercar
- **Rameau** Pièces de clavecin en concerts – Concert No 5 in D minor Rachel Brown *fl* Mark Caudle *vl* James Johnstone *hps* Chandos
- **Telemann** Tafelmusik: Part I - Overture in E minor Freiburger Barockorchester / Müllejans & von der Goltz Harmonia Mundi
- **Vivaldi** Flute Concerto in F, RV433 'La tempesta di mare' Barthold Kuijken *fl* La Petite Bande / S Kuijken Accent
- **JS Bach** Cantata BWV8 Collegium Vocale Gent / Herreweghe Harmonia Mundi
- **JS Bach** Partita for solo flute in A minor, BWV1013 Marc Hantaï *fl* Virgin Veritas
- **CPE Bach** Flute Sonata in A minor Barthold Kuijken *fl* Accent



*The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen to the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists*

# Opera



Richard Lawrence reviews DG's new Figaro from Baden-Baden:  
*'As Susanna, Karg moves effortlessly from the spirited girl of Act 1 to a tender, womanly "Deh vieni"'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 100**



Mike Ashman watches Katharina Wagner's Bayreuth Tristan:  
*'Christian Thielemann is not afraid here to sound deliberately un-beautiful when the staging needs it'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**

## Donizetti

**Poliuto**



**Michael Fabiano** ten.....Poliuto  
**Ana María Martínez** sop.....Paolina  
**Igor Golovatenko** bar.....Severo  
**Matthew Rose** bass.....Callistene  
**Emanuele D'Aguanno** ten.....Nearco  
**Timothy Robinson** ten.....Felice  
**Gyula Rab** ten **Adam Marsden** bar.....Christians  
**The Glyndebourne Chorus; London**  
**Philharmonic Orchestra / Enrique Mazzola**  
Stage director **Mariame Clément**  
Video director **François Roussillon**  
Opus Arte (F) DVD OA1211D; (F) Blu-ray OAABD7201D  
(117' + 15' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.1,  
DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/S). Recorded live,  
July 15, 2015. Extra features: 'Passion & Faith:  
Preparing for a UK premiere'; 'Love & Oppression:  
An interview with Mariame Clément'; Cast Gallery



It was slightly unfortunate timing that Glyndebourne scheduled the UK professional premiere of *Poliuto* just six months after Opera Rara gave an astonishing concert performance of *Les martyrs*, Donizetti's much grander French revision of the Italian original. The resulting Opus Arte release faces similarly stiff competition, albeit from Opera Rara's splendid studio recording on CD rather than DVD/Blu-ray. By and large, the casting for *Les martyrs* is stronger – and listeners won't have to suffer Mariame Clément's gloomy staging.

Clément updates the action from third-century Armenia under Roman rule to a vaguely late-20th-century Balkan setting, her inspiration being the Siege of Sarajevo. This switch of time and place brings absolutely no new insights. The Roman proconsul Severo becomes a general in the invading force. Paolina, daughter of the city's governor, was engaged to Severo but, believing him to be dead, she is now married to local nobleman Poliuto, who has secretly converted to Christianity. But Severo is very much alive and returns to claim Paolina, initiating a fierce love triangle which ends up

– in the libretto at least – with Paolina also converting to the faith, then joining Poliuto in being thrown to the lions. Julia Hansen's designs rely on grey monolithic slabs which slide back and forth across a largely bare stage, apart from a few props and video projections. Precious little use is made of differing levels and Clément's blocking is stilted; it made for a turgid experience in the theatre and is little stronger on screen.

Happily, the musical performances still make a strong case for the piece, if not as compelling as La Scala's 1960 excavation (variously available, 11/97), which starred Franco Corelli, Maria Callas and Ettore Bastianini, all on gripping form. Here Michael Fabiano tries to invoke the ghost of Corelli by belting out the role of Poliuto at maximum decibel level. The young American tenor is an exciting talent but he forces far too hard for comfort. Ana María Martínez is a tortured Paolina, plumbing the emotional depths, and Matthew Rose is menacing as Callistene, High Priest of Jupiter. The most notable performance comes from Igor Golovatenko as Severo, his bronzed baritone negotiating legato lines with *bel canto* ease.

Donizetti's score is very fine, clearly pointing the way for Verdi – the Act 2 finale provides an unmistakable foretaste of the triumphal scene from *Aida*. Enrique Mazzola does sterling work in the pit, injecting the score with the drama so sadly lacking on the stage. True Donizettians will want both versions of the opera, even if this *Poliuto* is better as an audio rather than a visual experience. **Mark Pullinger**

## Lehár

**Giuditta**

**Christiane Libor** sop.....Giuditta  
**Nikolai Schukoff** ten.....Octavio  
**Rupert Bergmann** bass-bar.....Manuele Biffi  
**Laura Scherwitzl** sop.....Anita  
**Ralf Simon** ten.....Pierrino  
**Mauro Peter** ten.....Sebastiano  
**Christian Eberl** bar.....Street Singer  
**Bavarian Radio Chorus; Munich Radio Orchestra / Ulf Schirmer**  
CPO (F) 2 CPO077 749-2 (142' • DDD)



Under the Mediterranean sun, a young soldier falls hard for a free-spirited beauty – and sacrifices honour and happiness in pursuit of a doomed love. If the plot of Lehár's *Giuditta* sounds reminiscent of *Carmen*, that's because this was Lehár's last and most serious shot at greatness: an operetta designed for the stage of the Vienna State Opera, no less. So don't expect champagne-fuelled escapism à la *Lustige Witwe*. This is a *musikalische Komödie* in the sense that *Carmen* is an *opéra comique*, and Lehár gave it his all. It hasn't been brilliantly served on disc. A good performance needs a conductor who can temper grand opera sweep with operetta *Schwung*, and a cast that's willing to push well beneath its gorgeous surface.

This new recording under Ulf Schirmer gets impressively close. It's clear from the expansive opening bars that Schirmer takes *Giuditta* seriously, and equally clear that his Munich orchestra is ready to rise to the occasion. The playing throughout is warm and transparent. Schirmer brings out every glint of the harp and rattle of the snare drum, and caresses Lehár's swirling woodwind countermeasures – but, crucially, keeps the action moving forwards. That's probably the single most impressive quality of this recording; that and its sheer generosity. This is the most complete version I've yet encountered of this often-cut score.

Schirmer's cast get into the spirit of the drama, with Christiane Libor making an infinitely more seductive-sounding *Giuditta* than Edda Moser on Willi Boskovsky's 1985 account with the same orchestra. Nikolai Schukoff, as Octavio, isn't Richard Tauber; but then, who is? Schukoff's dark, wide-grained tenor makes his heartbreak in the final scenes affectingly credible; equally, it's good to hear the show's great Tauberlied 'Du bist meine Sonne!' delivered as an ardent



Poliuto at Glyndebourne: a fine musical performance of Donizetti's opera shines through despite Mariame Clément's 'gloomy' staging

declaration of love rather than a New Year lollipop.

Together, Schukoff and Libor generate considerable voltage: listen to the scene 1 finale (disc 1, tr 9) from about 8'00" and feel the passion. Meanwhile Laura Scherwitzl and Ralf Simon provide exactly the brighter, lighter voices required for the show's secondary romantic couple Anita and Pierrino (with enough charm to offset Scherwitzl's occasionally wonky coloratura), while in the two roles of Giuditta's luckless husband Manuele and the club-owner Professor Martini (no, seriously) Rupert Bergmann switches convincingly from heartbreak to humour.

Reservations? Well, I'm afraid it's the usual case of CPO spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar: a track-listing that gives no indication of individual scenes, and no libretto or translation. For that, you'll need Richard Bonynge's sparkling but heavily cut English-language version on Telarc. Otherwise, this is a fine, affectionate recording: recommendable whether you've just discovered Lehár's intoxicating final masterpiece or, like Octavio, you lost your heart to *Giuditta* a long time ago.

**Richard Bratty**

Selected comparisons:

Boskovsky (1/86) (EMI) 615090-2  
Bonynge (11/97) (TELAC) CD80436

## Martinů

*Julieta* (sung in German)

**Juanita Lascarro** sop ..... *Julieta*

**Kurt Streit** ten ..... *Michel*

Other roles sung by **Marta Herman**, **Judita Nagyová**,

**Maria Pantiukhova**, **Nina Tarandek** mezz **Beau**

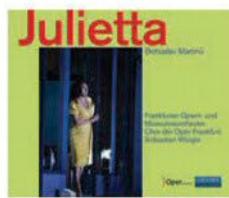
**Gibson**, **Michael McCown** tens **Boris Grappe** bar

**Magnús Baldvinsson**, **Andreas Bauer** basses

**Frankfurt Opera Chorus**; **Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra** / **Sebastian Weigle**

Oehms (F) ② OC966 (149' • DDD • S/T)

Recorded live, June-July 2015



Do you stay in the dream or wake up? Anticipating the red or blue pill choice offered to the hero of *The Matrix* by more than 60 years, Bohuslav Martinů's 1938 opera finishes at the Bureau of Dreams, where Michel – haunted by his love for Julieta, who may or may not have once reciprocated – decides he'd rather keep hunting this will-o'-the-wisp than leave at closing time. Yet a beggar, a prisoner and a bellhop are also chasing the same woman: even Michel's dream of Julieta isn't something he has to himself.

*Julieta* was given its first performance in French, then swiftly translated into Czech.

Frankfurt Opera, however, plumped for a German translation in their 2015 performances (by Dietfried Bernet, although no one is credited in the CD booklet) and, on this live recording, what is evanescent and surreal in French becomes more guttural, more neurotic – the Bureau of Dreams now a decidedly Kafkaesque destination.

This tail-chasing opera may be having a mini-renaissance: Richard Jones's well-travelled staging landed in London in 2012 and Frankfurt's production was followed by another at the Berlin Staatsoper this year with Rolando Villazón and Magdalena Kožená, conducted by Daniel Barenboim. The opera's new lease of life probably depends most on what theatrical panache a director can tease out of it. Here, on record, we are flying blind; and if Sebastian Weigle draws incisive playing from the Frankfurters, teasing out the crunchy textures (a perpetually wailing bassoon is practically the opera's main character) and hurtling ostinatos, Martinů's score stretches out its Stravinsky-edged angst and Ravel-tinged flourishes to perilous lengths. This is a hard opera to love.

By far the strongest section is the middle act, with its tantalising almost-love duet for Michel and Julieta, and macabre interjections from a souvenir seller peddling invented memories and a threatening

fortune-teller. Here Weigle brings a wistful shimmer and languour to the music without compromising on the creepiness. Kurt Streit's Michel and Juanita Lascarro's Julietta make the most of the scene too. Perhaps because she is singing in German, Lascarro is much more intense and passionate than Kožená's flighty Julietta was in Berlin; Streit, meanwhile, attacks Michel's treacherously high-lying, declamatory music with an intelligence and suppleness that completely escaped the flailing, overheated Villazón. Streit tires by the opera's conclusion, but he is not the only one.

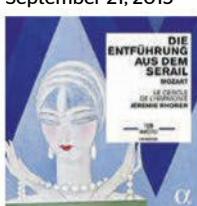
The supporting cast are admirably focused, many sharing roles either because the dream world requires it or because of economy. Beau Gibson impresses as the Policeman who's also a Postman, and Boris Grappe is almost tenderly weird as the Memory-Seller. Oehms provides only the translated German libretto, and so an elusive opera becomes that much more elusive. **Neil Fisher**

## Mozart

### Die Entführung aus dem Serail

**Jane Archibald** sop ..... Konstanze  
**Rachele Gilmore** sop ..... Blonde  
**Norman Reinhart** ten ..... Belmonte  
**David Portillo** ten ..... Pedrillo  
**Mischa Schelomianski** bass ..... Osmin  
**Christoph Quest** spkr ..... Pasha Selim

**Ensemble Aedes; Le Cercle de l'Harmonie / Jérémie Rhorer**  
**Alpha** ② ALPHA242 (121' • DDD • S/T/t)  
 Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, September 21, 2015



Soon after the past year's flurry from Jacobs (Harmonia Mundi, 10/15), Nézet-Séguin (DG, 8/15) and the Glyndebourne production by David McVicar (Opus Arte, 8/16), here is another abduction into Mozart's pseudo-Turkish world of love, threatened chastity, attempted rescue and forgiveness. The first fruit of an unspecified longer-term collaboration between conductor Jérémie Rhorer, his period-instrument orchestra Le Cercle de l'Harmonie, the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées and the label Alpha, this live concert recording was made a short while after some of the artists had worked together on a staged production at Aix-en-Provence. The orchestra play with gracefulness, warmth, wit and flair as Mozart's score demands; the janissary percussionists do not produce the visceral thrill they might have done (especially in an Overture that minces rather

than punches); but sublime orchestrations in arias such as the interplay between woodwinds and strings in Belmonte's 'Ich bau ganz' are played with velvety finesse.

Jane Archibald sings Konstanze's set pieces with admirable dignity (a lovely 'Traurigkeit' with flawlessly shaped woodwinds) and resolute virtue ('Marten aller Arten', in which the *concertante* quartet play beautifully but *tutti* orchestral contributions seem to lack *Sturm und Drang* vigour until the aria reaches its climactic stages); this is not mere postulating created by hammed-up lamentation or confrontation but a perceptive realisation of this Samuel Richardson-like heroine. Norman Reinhart discreetly conceals traces of a bigger voice in Belmonte's quicker coloratura phrases in 'O wie ängstlich', although otherwise his depiction of the would-be rescuer's shifting emotions of ardent sentimentality and naive hopefulness are spot-on (and every detail of instrumental colour and emotional expression is realised neatly by Rhorer and his orchestra).

Mischa Schelomianski not only has Osmin's obligatory low notes but sings them articulately, and characterises the villain with an endearing touch of humour. Rachele Gilmore's sweet singing in 'Durch Zärtlichkeit' makes Blonde seem demure rather than feisty (the soft highest notes wobble just a little, but that's inevitable in a live performance), and her chiding of the grumpy Osmin is lightly comical (as it should be). David Portillo performs Pedrillo's 'In Mohrenland gefangen war' elegantly – but did some of the Parisian audience really have to clap after it? Clearly it is their fault that Osmin wakes up sober enough to foil the lovers' escape plot.

The clandestine reunion of all four escapees in the quartet at the end of Act 2 is one of the supreme miracles of Mozart's genius as a musical dramatist, and this radiant performance touchingly conveys its microcosm of bliss, love, jealousy, reconciliation and hope. But although the spoken dialogues between the singers and actor Christoph Quest (Pasha Selim) are effectively conversational and dramatic enough, they are hindered by severe abridgement, which too often in important scenes obscures the nuances, motivations and reactions of characters.

Nevertheless, Rhorer's astute pacing of the musical drama, consistently persuasive tempi, stylish sculpting of orchestral subtleties and sensible casting of singers who prove to be suitable for the vocal and dramatic demands of their roles all means that this very enjoyable recording arguably has an advantage of musical consistency over other recent versions. **David Vickers**

## Mozart

### Le nozze di Figaro

**Luca Pisaroni** bass-bar ..... Figaro  
**Christiane Karg** sop ..... Susanna  
**Thomas Hampson** bar ..... Count Almaviva  
**Sonya Yoncheva** sop ..... Countess Almaviva  
**Angela Brower** mez ..... Cherubino  
**Anne Sofie von Otter** mez ..... Marcellina  
**Maurizio Muraro** bass ..... Bartolo  
**Rolando Villazón** ten ..... Don Basilio  
**Jean-Paul Fouchécourt** ten ..... Don Curzio  
**Philippe Sly** bass-bar ..... Antonio  
**Regula Mühlemann** sop ..... Barbarina  
**Rastatt Vocal Ensemble; Chamber Orchestra of Europe / Yannick Nézet-Séguin**  
**DG** ③ 479 5945GH3 (174' • DDD • S/T/t)



This is the fourth in the series of Mozart opera recordings from the Festspielhaus in

Baden-Baden masterminded by Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Rolando Villazón. The last of the da Ponte comedies to appear, it's a faint disappointment after the excellence of *Don Giovanni* (12/12) and *Così fan tutte* (11/13): Nézet-Séguin has shown himself to be a good Mozartian but there are one or two places here where – how to put it? – the drama slips through his fingers. It's not so much a question of speed, his tempi being pretty much ideal, as of weight. The bars before Antonio bursts in with his ruined carnations, the climax of 'Dove sono', even the Countess's last entrance in the garden scene: all fail to make much of an impact. And although Nézet-Séguin produces a good crescendo in the teasing exchange between Figaro and the Count in the Act 2 finale, the clinching phrase about Cherubino's commission – and here I think he does take the section too fast – doesn't bring about a sense of release. The COE play beautifully; the *secco* recitatives are accompanied by cello and fortepiano, the latter also to be heard – never intrusively – in some of the arias and ensembles.

The cast is led by Luca Pisaroni and Christiane Karg. Pisaroni's dark-toned Figaro is dangerous in 'Se vuol ballare', bitter in 'Aprite un po' quelgi occhi'. The dotted rhythm of 'Non più andrai' is foot-tappingly crisp and his pacing of the recitative when plotting with Susanna and the Countess is exemplary. As Susanna, Karg moves effortlessly from the spirited girl of Act 1 – there's some delightfully playful decoration to the last phrases of the second duet – to a tender, womanly account of 'Deh vieni'. She blends perfectly with the Countess in the Letter Duet. Unlike her colleagues, Sonya Yoncheva doesn't ornament her arias, not



DG's all-star Figaro from Baden-Baden, with (l to r) Angela Brower, Luca Pisaroni, Christiane Karg, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sonya Yoncheva and Thomas Hampson

even essaying a lead-in to the reprise of 'Dove sono'; but her open-throated singing is glorious. Interestingly, she doesn't display the usual irritation with Susanna in the dressing-up scene. Thomas Hampson, though, gets quite violent towards Cherubino. He makes an authoritative Count but tends to sing sharp when being forceful. Angela Brower, a soprano-sounding mezzo, is a spirited, coltish Cherubino.

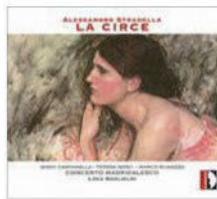
If you must cast a mezzo as Marcellina, omit the Act 4 aria. If you must include the aria, cast a soprano. It's as simple as that; but the conductor casts a mezzo and includes the aria, so 'Il capro e la capretta' is transposed down by a minor third. Anne Sofie von Otter is fine elsewhere and she is well partnered by the formidable Bartolo of Maurizio Muraro. Rolando Villazón is amusingly camp in Basilio's recitatives, and he crowns 'In quegli anni' with a ringing top B flat.

The traditional order of Act 3 is retained, the trial scene preceding 'Dove sono'. As mentioned, there are some (nicely done) embellishments; appoggiaturas, too, though there's a crucial one missing when the Count echoes 'Poverino!' in the Act 1 trio. Also missing is the slap in the Recognition Sextet. No applause; quiet laughter here and there. Not a vintage performance, then, but a more than acceptable addition to the series. **Richard Lawrence**

## Stradella

### La Circe

**Jenny Campanella** sop ..... L'Ombra di Circe  
**Teresa Nesci** sop ..... Zeffiro  
**Marco Scavazza** bar ..... Algido  
**Concerto Madrigalesco / Guglielmi Luca** org/hpd  
**Stradivarius**  STR37040 (52' • DDD • T/t)  
 Recorded live 2008



Stradella's serenata *La Circe* was commissioned by Princess Olimpia Aldobrandini, a Florentine whose deceased Roman husbands had been members of powerful Borghese and Pamphilj families. The occasion was a lavish party at her villa in the Frascati hills on May 16, 1668, that celebrated Leopoldo de' Medici becoming a cardinal. On these grounds alone, the serenata marks a fascinating intersection of aristocratic patronage of the arts in Baroque Rome.

The poet Giovan Filippo Apolloni's panegyric is set at a beautiful fountain on the leafy slopes of Parnassus: the ghost of the sorceress Circe emerges from the Elysian Fields, reminds us that she is Apollo's daughter and informs us she is searching for the tomb of her son Telegonus but

has become distracted by a bright light; the Frascati river god Algido explains that this light is the presence of a Medici. Circe proceeds to have a conversation with an echoing Zephyr, and all three singers go on to offer praises of the new cardinal; eyewitnesses at the party reported that at this point each of the singers presented expensive gifts to the prestigious Medici guest.

No doubt such visual spectacle is difficult to recover in a drabber modern concert setting but harpsichordist Luca Guglielmi, his chamber ensemble Concerto Madrigalesco (two violins and bass viol) and three stylistically adroit singers convey the charm and skilfulness of Stradella's music in this live recording made in Geneva in 2008; Marco Scavazza's suave baritone is particularly pleasing and many of the little arias for soprano voices with flourishes for the violins seem to foreshadow Alessandro Scarlatti. The obtuse poetry and the reverberant acoustic's impact on the soprano voices prevent this from being an ideal introduction to the most talented Italian composer of his generation, but for those already converted this rarity is an intriguing pleasure. **David Vickers**

## Wagner

**Tristan und Isolde**  
**Stephen Gould** ten.....



Tristan

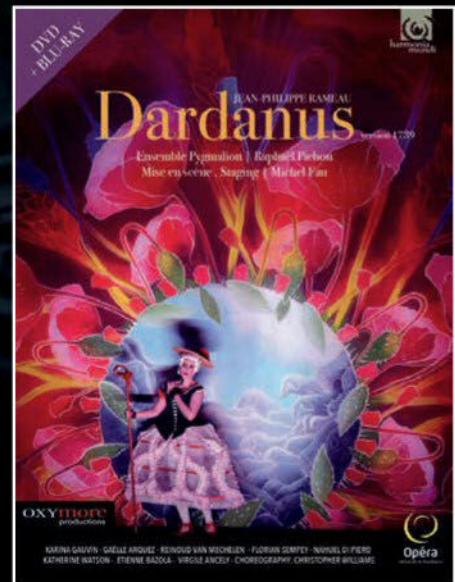


JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU

# DARDANUS

VERSION 1739

ENSEMBLE PYGMALION | RAPHAËL PICHON  
CHOREOGRAPHY | CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS  
STAGING | MICHEL FAU



DVD + Blu-Ray disc HMD 985905/52

KARINA GAUVIN - GAËLLE ARQUEZ - REINOU德 VAN MECHELEN - FLORIAN SEMPEY  
NAHUEL DI PIERO - KATHERINE WATSON - ETIENNE BAZOLA - VIRGILE ANCELY

'A sensational show!' *Le Figaro*

This video was recorded at the performances of the first version of *Dardanus* (1739) given at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux in April 2015, in a production by Michel Fau notable for its delicious candy colours. Raphaël Pichon, the Ensemble Pygmalion and a peerless line-up of soloists received unanimous acclaim from public and press alike.



Georg Zeppenfeld (Marke) and Stephen Gould (Tristan) in Katharina Wagner's Bayreuth production of her great-grandfather's opera

**Georg Zeppenfeld** bass.....Marke

**Evelyn Herlitzius** sop.....Isolde

**Iain Paterson** bass-bar.....Kurwenal

**Raimund Nolte** bass-bar.....Melot

**Christa Mayer** mez.....Brangäne

**Tansel Akzeybek** ten.....Young Sailor/Shepherd

**Kay Stiefermann** bar.....Steersman

**Chorus and Orchestra of the Bayreuth Festival /**

**Christian Thielemann**

**Stage director** Katharina Wagner

**Video director** Michael Beyer

DG (E) ② 073 5251GH2; (E) 073 5354GH

(4h 29' + 16' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.0,

DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Extras: Interviews with Stephen Gould and

Christian Thielemann



Following her iconoclastic role-reversing 2008 *Meistersinger* (Opus Arte, 3/11), Katharina Wagner

now gets a novel focus on *Tristan und Isolde* by stripping the work, its characters and its settings almost entirely of Romantic illusions and pretensions.

Her stage world shows symbolisations of the emotional geography of Wagner's drama. Act 1 is a Piranesi-like assembly of mobile stairs and walkways, hindering the would-be lovers from getting together as

unconventionally early as they wish. Act 2 is a prison yard monitored from above by Marke, Melot and guards. It features self-activating metal bar cages, over the largest of which the lovers – at the expense of bleeding – gain some control. Act 3 is just a narrow lit space in the darkness where Kurwenal, the Shepherd and some retainers sit by the dying Tristan. In his delirium, Tristan thinks he sees 'Isolde' (a sequence of doubles or models, some of which collapse alarmingly, or bleed) in raised triangular lit spaces. As soon as the Liebestod is over, Isolde (as at the end of Act 2) is led away forcibly by Marke, as if back to her wifely and regal duties.

The concentrated acting performances are closely supported by Christian Thielemann's approach, a marked contrast to his rather unspecific live recording of the piece from Vienna (DG, 8/04). He's not afraid here to sound deliberately un-beautiful when the staging needs it – try the distractions to the lovers after the (here) pouring away of the potion in Act 1 or Tristan's first monologue when Isolde's ship doesn't arrive in Act 3. Or to vary tempi much more widely than, say, Karl Böhm (DG and other labels, Bayreuth 1960s) for Tristan's arrival in Act 2 (very fast) or the Liebestod (pretty broad). Like the staging, this is not a Romantic reading.

Evelyn Herlitzius delivers the Act 1 narratives with fury and power, and seems later not to be outshone by Stephen Gould's noble, larger-sounding Tristan. The tenor is especially impressive in his untiring handling of Act 3's delusions. Both show immense understanding of and ability to communicate their complex texts at every moment. Georg Zeppenfeld's often cruel, unforgiving Marke captures a wider range in the role than many – from sadistic jokey involvement in his Act 2 spying role to genuine horror when he sees and hears the lovers' declarations. He wears his imaginative costume and Homburg hat well – a flamboyant Visconti-esque yellow standing out from the drabber colours around him. Iain Paterson is both inexhaustible and moving in his understatement of the frustrations and emotion of Kurwenal's support for Tristan.

Michael Beyer's video direction sometimes takes the imaginary spectator up into the fly galleries of the theatre, the better to picture the stage layouts beneath. The Blu-ray mode itself is predictably sharp throughout and most effective in picking up detail in the darkest moments of Act 3. This is an important and compelling addition to the number of worthwhile interventionist Bayreuth productions of the opera already captured on DVD. **Mike Ashman**

# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

## *Stokowski and Sargent in their element*

Stokowski championing the new, Sargent on masterly form, Ravel from Moscow and a great clarinettist

**A** deafening din of teenage approval greets jazz trombonist Tommy Dorsey for the 1945 world premiere performance of a Dorsey commission, Nathaniel Shilkret's Trombone Concerto, with the New York City Symphony under Leopold Stokowski. Shilkret, you may recall, made the first recording of Gershwin's *An American in Paris* (with the composer himself playing the celesta) and there are numerous allusions to Gershwin – and to *An American* in particular – in this particular piece. The overall style is very 1940s, an approximate blend of Strauss, Gershwin, Korngold in film-music mode and the Ellington of 'Come Sunday' (*Black, Brown and Beige*). Dorsey himself plays wonderfully well for most of the time, his vibrato characteristically vocal in its speed and intensity, while Stokowski's accompaniment is tight as a drum, although at one point he has to threaten shut-down if the kids in the audience don't keep quiet (which thankfully they do).

The premiere performance of Paul Creston's equally dramatic and nostalgic-sounding Saxophone Concerto Op 26, given in the same year with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra, inspires some dazzling virtuosity from the excellent soloist James Abato, again with Stokowski and his orchestra in alert attendance, the woodwinds especially deft. To call both works 'period pieces' sounds like a mild put-down but they're a good deal more than that and offer sure proof of just how wholeheartedly Stokowski could throw himself at aspects of popular musical culture.

The third item on this highly enjoyable collection of '20th Century Americana' is the Italian premiere (1955) of Morton Gould's catchy *Latin-American Symphonette* where, after one or two sticky moments early on in the opening 'Rumba', Stokowski and his RAI Orchestra of Turin settle to a performance that is rhythmically driven

and awash with local colour. All three works are reasonably well recorded given their period, save for the distant drone of a passing piston-driven aircraft in Creston's slow movement, and the transfers are pretty good.

Stokowski, at the Royal Festival Hall in August 1961, gave a truly mesmerising performance of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, the first movement built along epic lines, the sound of the string bands truly Stokowskian in their tonal lustre while the *Largo* draws from the LSO players a reading of maximum intensity and the finale is boldly confrontational, the questions posed more at the movement's quiet centre than at its swift, thunderous close, where Stokowski presses for maximum drama. All of which is in total contrast with a warm-textured 1954 CBS Radio Orchestra account of Vaughan Williams's ravishing *Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'* a performance that recalls Stokowski's expressively potent way with the *Tallis Fantasia*.

Those who treasure Stokowski's white-hot Everest recording of Tchaikovsky's *Hamlet* Overture-Fantasy with the Stadium Symphony Orchestra (aka New York Philharmonic) may have encountered a later live version with the Boston Symphony, which differs from its predecessor in virtually every musical respect – texture, tempo relations, phrasing, even some of the scoring (especially in relation to the timpani). Guild offers us a third version, an LSO concert performance dating from 1959, a year before Everest's classic – and faster by two minutes. It's also a lot less precise too, the earlier stages of the piece sounding positively panic-stricken. Here the mono sound lacks clarity especially in comparison with both the New York and Boston (stereo) versions, the former being one of the most spectacular twin-channel recordings of the period.

My first stereo purchase of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto featured a febrile and occasionally tremulous-sounding Ruggiero Ricci with the LSO under Sir Malcolm Sargent, always a superb accompanist. Guild has just reissued an earlier, mono Ricci/Sargent version of the Tchaikovsky with the New Symphony Orchestra, recorded in 1950 and very well transferred. Some minor textural anomalies aside, it's a good performance, fairly intense and less nervy than its successor and with an especially plaintive canzonetta. The coupling is a 1955 account of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony with the BBC SO published to celebrate Sir Malcolm's 60th birthday, a big, weighty performance, the first movement emphatically argued, the second passionate and warm-hearted (unquestionably the performance's high point) and the finale both broadly paced and shorn of around 100 bars which incurs less structural damage than you'd expect, which is largely down I think to Sargent's authoritative way with the work overall. The final impression is of a deeply considered interpretation, not at all the sort of surface display so often associated with the Proms Maestro commonly (and unfairly) dubbed 'Flash Harry'.

### THE RECORDINGS



**Creston** Sax Concerto **Gould**

Latin-American Symphonette

**Shilkret** Trombone Concerto

**Dorsey, Abato / Stokowski**

Guild © GHCD2424



**Shostakovich** Symphony No 5

**Tchaikovsky** Hamlet

**Vaughan Williams** Five Variants

LSO, CBS RO / Stokowski

Guild © GHCD2426



**Tchaikovsky** Violin Concerto.

Symphony No 5

Ricci; BBC SO, New SO /

Sargent

Guild © GHCD2425



Trombonist Tommy Dorsey rehearses Nathaniel Shilkret's Trombone Concerto with Leopold Stokowski (right)

## Russian Ravel

March 1975 marked the centenary of the birth of Maurice Ravel and among the concerts that celebrated the event was an all-Ravel programme at the Moscow State Conservatory given by the USSR State Academic Symphony Orchestra conducted by Evgeny Svetlanov. The performances are gripping to say the least, the opening *Pavane for a Dead Princess* clocking up a fairly broad 7'33" (identical in duration to Antonio Pedrotti's recently reissued Czech Philharmonic recording) though textures are uncommonly transparent and the playing is very expressive.

The most remarkable aspect of the *Mother Goose* Suite is Svetlanov's Mahlerian rendition of the closing 'Fairy Garden' with a ravishing account of the final modulation though 'Little Ugly Girl', while well characterised, suffers brass fluffs and a feeble gong (1'08", track 7). The *Daphnis et Chloé* Second Suite opens to a gently rippling 'dawn' and a climax that would truly have blazed had the recording been fully up to scratch. The 'Pantomime' is very freely handled and features a violently accelerating middle section (4'00", tr 3) while the fiercely driven closing 'Danse général' just about survives its over-fast tempo.

*Rapsodie espagnole* enjoys some seductive phrasing in the middle movements and a rumbustious closing 'Féria'. The overriding impression is of sensuousness and boundless albeit raw enthusiasm rather than Gallic refinement, in other words a viscerally thrilling diversion not to be indulged too often.

PHOTOGRAPHY: AP/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

### THE RECORDING



**Ravel** Rapsodie espagnole, etc  
USSR State Academic SO /  
Svetlanov  
Melodiya ⑧ MELCD1002338

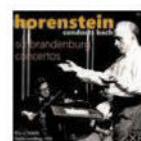
## Vienna in the 1950s

Turn to Vienna in 1950 with Clemens Krauss leading the Vienna Symphony in Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture and incidental music, and the mood changes from frenetic excitement to temperate amiability with moderate tempos, affectionate phrasing and a sweetness to the singing (the Chorus of the Vienna State Opera and sopranos Dagmar Herrman and Ilona Steingruber) that fits the music like a glove. Needless to say that, given the place and the period, Mendelssohn hadn't exactly been flavour of the month in the recent past, but Krauss's quietly stylish performances, his affectionate way of shaping the music, is bound to raise a smile. I should also mention in this context a Viennese set of Bach *Brandenburg Concertos* from 1954 under Jascha Horenstein issued at budget price (with a line-up including Nikolaus Harnoncourt, no less, playing viola da gamba), spruce, lively performances, offering half a nod towards the upcoming trend of period performance practice. As for Krauss's Mendelssohn, Opus Kura's coupling hails from Bamberg in 1951, Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony, lacking its first-movement repeat but always sympathetic. Transfers from LP are generally excellent all round.

## THE RECORDINGS



**Mendelssohn** A Midsummer Night's Dream **Schubert**  
Symphony No 8  
**VSO, Bamberg SO / Krauss**  
Opus Kura ⑧ OPK7076



**Bach** Brandenburg Concertos  
**Vienna Soloists / Horenstein**  
Pristine Audio ② PASC468

## Mellifluous Mozart

Vienna is also the focus for a highly desirable 11-CD set which showcases the artistry of that superb Austrian clarinettist Leopold Wlach, who died 60 years ago this year. Wlach was famed for his mellifluous tone and as a much sought-after teacher who trained many outstanding pupils. Regrettably this set comes without notes of any kind, but the contents are of considerable quality and involve Wlach in collaboration with the likes of the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet (in the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets), the pianist Jörg Demus (the two Brahms sonatas) and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Herbert von Karajan.

Two recordings of Mozart's *Gran Partita* are included, one from 1947 involving the Vienna Philharmonic Soloists conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler, though, oddly, there's no mention anywhere of Furtwängler's name. The other version, from 1953, involves the Vienna Philharmonic Wind Group and favours a perky, nicely pointed approach, appealing in its way but no real match for the profound mellowness of Furtwängler's wonderful performance. Similar comparisons might be made between performances of Mozart's Concerto under Karajan and Artur Rodzinski where the former's refinement pays highest dividends. Henry Swoboda achieves stylish results in the *Sinfonia Concertante*, K297b and there are memorable performances of chamber works by Beethoven, Glinka (*Trio pathétique*), Schubert (Octet), Mendelssohn, Haydn, Rimsky-Korsakov (B flat Quintet), Brahms and of course much more Mozart. The recordings themselves are drawn from various sources and come across extremely well. Strongly recommended. **G**

### THE RECORDING



**The Art of Leopold Wlach**  
Scribendum ⑧ ⑪ SC802

# Books



**Arnold Whittall reviews Roger Scruton's new Wagner book:**  
*'No philosopher active in Nietzsche's wake makes stronger demands for the attention of Wagnerians than Scruton'*



**Patrick Rucker reads Oliver Hilme's new Liszt biography:**  
*'The book has a richly contextual feel, deriving from Hilme's use of primary sources to further the narrative'*

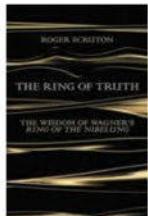
## The Ring of Truth

**The Wisdom of Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung**

**By Roger Scruton**

Allen Lane, HB, 401pp, £25

ISBN 978-0-241-18855-2



However determinedly musicologists try to confine the serious study of Wagner to developments that affected music in general and opera in particular during the 19th century, other kinds of writers have refused to be silenced – not least philosophers. The first – Nietzsche – set the bar of controversy high, and no philosopher active in Nietzsche's wake makes stronger demands for the attention of Wagnerians than Roger Scruton.

In 2005 Scruton published a concise and challenging study of *Tristan und Isolde* whose linking of 'sex and the sacred' in the title signalled that he understood that music drama as 'a work with profound religious meaning'. Now he makes comparable claims for *The Ring*, on the grounds that Wagner's later operas 'are more than mere dramas: they are revelations, attempts to penetrate to the mysterious core of human existence'. More sweepingly still, '*The Ring* is not only a work of philosophy, but one that uses music to cast a unique light on the human condition.'

Scruton has plenty of musical expertise and proclaims music's supremacy as 'the vehicle for Wagner's dramatic intention'. Again, something unique seems to be involved, as the orchestra 'fills in the space between the revealed emotions with all the ancestral fears and longings of our species, irresistibly transforming these individual passions into symbols of a common destiny that can be sensed but not told. Wagner acquaints us with our lot, and makes available to an age without religious belief the core religious experience – an experience that we need, but which we also

flee from, since it demands from us even more than it gives.'

These quotations give a flavour of the sermonising tone that punctuates Scruton's text, complementing the intricate close reading of the four *Ring* dramas and their sources that otherwise dominates as he seeks to expose their attempt 'to penetrate to the mysterious core of human existence', and, as a philosopher, to explain and even dissolve that mystery, as must surely occur if a work of art is to become 'a work of philosophy'. Scruton's frequent use of the present tense, and his references to 'us', 'we' and 'our', indicate the most obvious differences between his approach and earlier 21st-century accounts of *The Ring* by Mark Berry (Ashgate: 2006) and Daniel Foster (CUP: 2010). It's a pity that Scruton doesn't engage more directly with these and other commentators who focus so productively on the specifically 19th-century character and relevance of the cycle, and who might therefore be thought to complement or contradict his arguments. His book about *Tristan* has been criticised by a historian of philosophy – Julian Young – for losing touch with Wagner's own likely understanding of his literary source materials. If something similar is said about this new book, that simply underlines the level of interpretative empathy involved in sustaining a narrative claiming nothing less than an understanding of what Wagner saw as 'the task of art – the task bequeathed by the death of our gods. Art must show us freedom in its immediate, contingent human form, reminding us of what it means to us. Even if we live in a world from which gods and heroes have disappeared, we can, by imagining them, dramatise the deep truths of our condition, and renew our faith in what we are.' In such ways, Scruton is telling us in no uncertain terms what he, as a deep thinker, senses about the essence of the Wagnerian enterprise.

Scruton does not shy away from the paradoxes of a work that changed as it evolved over decades. But although he would doubtless reject with some

vehement the idea that Wagner's tetralogy is, in Young's terms, 'a narcotic', his text often reads as if it is suffused with certainty that *The Ring* is so special that it doesn't merely entertain and inspire but can permanently transform the thinking and influence the behaviour of those who respond appropriately to it.

Scruton's most forceful assertion is that 'Wagner mounts a vision of what is at stake in human life, a vision that, for its philosophical depth and poetic richness, is surely supreme in the world of opera' – the present tenses again implying that what could have been true in Wagner's lifetime remains true today. But Scruton also believes that 'as the star of religion declines so does the lust for desecration grow; and this, in brief, is the twilight – the inner twilight of the modern psyche – into which Wagner leads us' – a belief implying a rejection of much that has happened in music, culture and society since Wagner's own time.

It is readers who instinctively sympathise with that lowering conclusion who will probably feel most comfortable with the arguments and attitudes on offer in *The Ring of Truth*. **Arnold Whittall**

## Franz Liszt

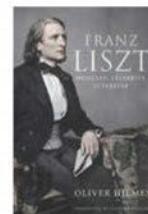
**Musician, Celebrity, Superstar**

**By Oliver Hilmes**

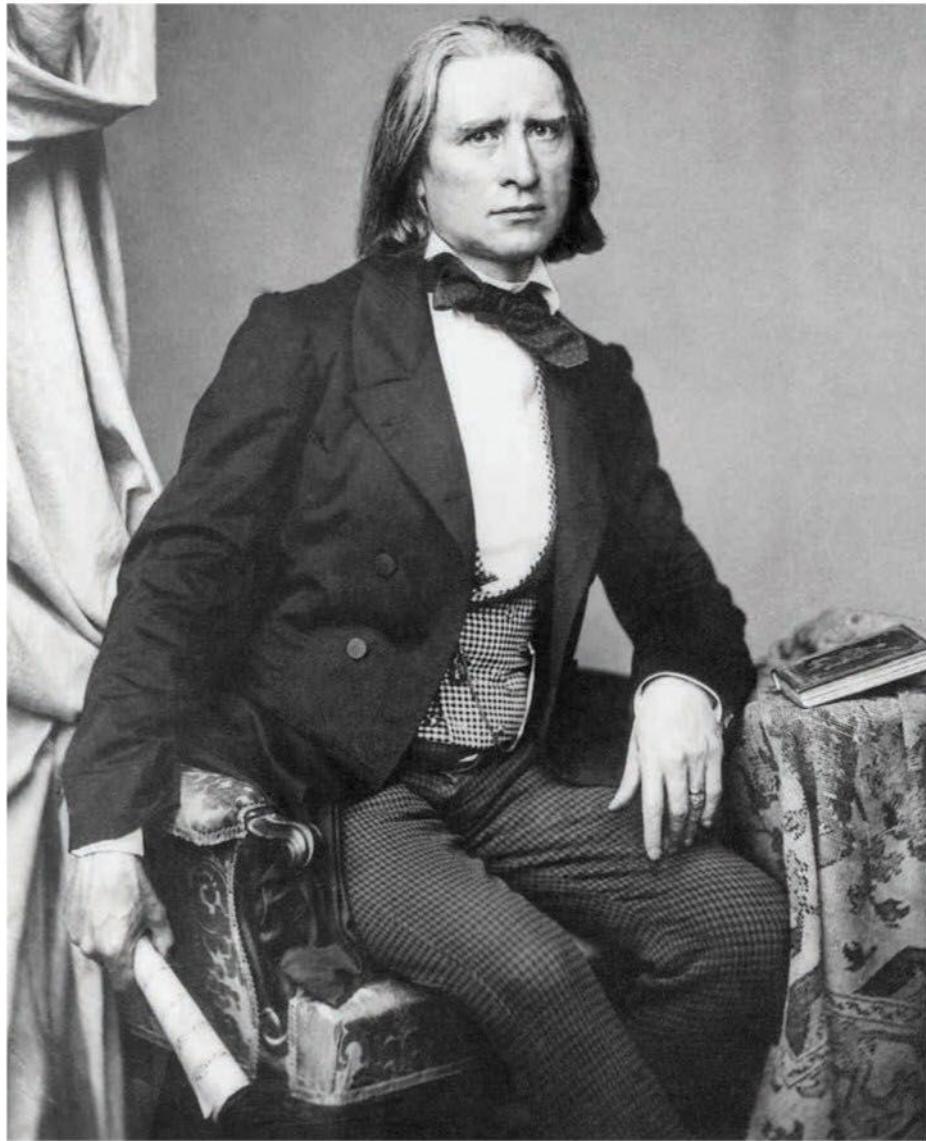
**Translated by Stewart Spencer**

Yale University Press, HB, 368pp, £19.99

ISBN 978-0-30-018293-4



Even now, 130 years after Liszt's death in Bayreuth, his long, multifaceted career and personal celebrity continue to attract popular biographers. The latest is the Berlin-based Oliver Hilmes who, over the past decade and a half, has produced lives of Alma Mahler-Werfel, Ludwig II of Bavaria and Cosima Wagner, as well as studies of the Wagner clan and Mahler reception. Originally



Franz Liszt: the great virtuoso is the subject of a new biography from Yale University Press

published in German in 2011, Hilmes's biography now appears in an eminently readable English translation by Stewart Spencer, courtesy of Yale University Press.

The book has a richly contextual feel, deriving from Hilmes's use of primary sources to further the narrative, including diaries, correspondence and memoirs by Liszt's father, Ádám, the mother of his three children, Marie d'Agoult, the Wittgensteins (Carolyne and her daughter, Marie), and by the Wagners. And unusually for a biography targeting a general readership, this one taps a source apparently given short shrift by previous biographers, if known to them at all. Hilmes draws on more than a thousand pages from a file labelled 'The Wittgenstein Affair' in Weimar's Thuringian State Archives. Covering the years from 1848 to 1860, they parallel almost exactly the period Liszt spent as Kapellmeister to the Weimar Court,

living openly with his mistress, Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein. Containing instructions by two generations of the Grand Ducal family, papers prepared by ministers, ambassadors, lawyers and clerks, along with much else, they paint a vivid picture of Carolyne's struggle to have her Russian marriage annulled in order to marry Liszt. Though her efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, this account makes clear the number of people – in Germany, Russia and Rome – involved, machinations surrounding control of a large fortune (essentially Carolyne's patrimony) and the devastating costs, financial and emotional, exacted on the principals.

Yet among this welter of detail, with so many examples of what others felt and thought about Liszt, the man himself is oddly absent from this biography. The penultimate paragraph's suggestion that "the real Liszt" lies hidden behind a whole series of masks' seems to represent a facile

sidestepping of biographical responsibility by an author who flits all around without ever fully engaging with his subject. It is an impression underscored by the fact that, of the dozens of titles mentioned from the hundreds upon hundreds of Liszt's compositions, virtually none are given substantive treatment. It also makes one wonder, given the extravagant harvest from the correspondence by so many of Liszt's associates, how much time Hilmes devoted to the roughly 8000 of Liszt's own letters thus far published.

Hilmes's choice of chroniclers and the weight he accords them can also seem questionable on occasion. Ádám Liszt's sometimes self-serving letters to his son's former teacher, Carl Czerny, and to friends back home tend to claim the lion's share of responsibility for young Franz's tremendous success. Thus the full extent of the interventions of the Erards, foremost piano makers of the day, in Liszt's sensational debuts in Paris and London, not to mention the relative ease with which the Hungarian family established themselves in Paris, is neglected.

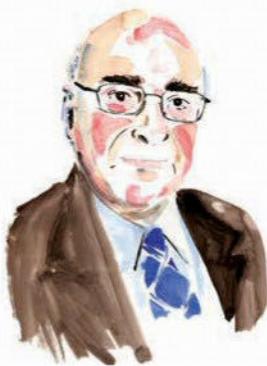
Much later, from numerous personal accounts of Liszt's famous Weimar masterclasses, Hilmes relies heavily on the rather negative evaluations of Sauer, Weingartner and Lachmund. He creates a picture of ruthlessly ambitious if less than talented amateurs presided over by a doddering alcoholic, willing to endure any degree of exploitation in exchange for attention from the young. It seems a curious spin to put on a laboratory of musical performance through which passed the likes of Menter, Rosenthal, Zarebski, Thomán, Siloti, d'Albert, Lamond and da Motta, among a host of grateful others who would be active well into the 20th century.

Yet Hilmes unquestionably writes movingly about the deaths of Liszt's son Daniel at the age of 20 and of his eldest child, Blandine Ollivier, less than three years later. Liszt's erstwhile pupil and clandestine lover during the early 1850s, Agnes Street-Klindworth, is given appropriately in-depth coverage, followed by pages of sheer speculation about any role she might have played as an agent for her spymaster father. On the other hand, Liszt's relationship with Olga von Meyendorff, who, to some extent, replaced Carolyne as his favoured confidant in later life, is relatively unexplored.

But if one is after a novelistic read about a historical figure and doesn't mind the occasional factual error or perpetuation of the sensationalist tropes of previous biographers, this is just the ticket.

**Patrick Rucker**

# Classics RECONSIDERED



**Rob Cowan** and  
**Richard Bratby** revisit  
the Emerson Quartet's  
Gramophone Award-winning  
recording of the complete  
Bartók String Quartets



## Bartók

String Quartets

**Emerson Quartet**

DG 50 2 477 6322

The impression one gains from these recordings is of massive tonal projection and superlative clarity, each textural strand coloured and made audible to a degree possibly unrivalled in the recorded history of these works. DG's close, brightly lit, yet never oppressive recording quality must share some of the credit for that, of course. Combine this with controlled vehemence and razor-sharp unanimity, and you have a formidable alliance of virtues.

**Rob Cowan** Since David Fanning wrote his *Gramophone* review, a whole plethora of versions has explored the expressive potential of what is surely the greatest cycle of quartets after Beethoven, a 'magical mystery tour' through 30 years of burgeoning creative development that starts and concludes in realms dominated by emotional unrest. Fanning alludes to the way the Emerson Quartet emotes at the start of the First Quartet, that 'funeral dirge' marking Bartók's unfulfilled infatuation with the violinist Stefi Geyer, and it's true that in comparison with recordings by the Takács (Decca) and Mikrokosmos (Hungaroton) quartets, the Emersons' intense vibrato and prominent expressive *portamenti* more suggest an affirmation of love than its passing. The giveaway in Fanning's review is the word 'exciting', especially in the context of the two great Hungarian quartets that he refers to in that same closing paragraph. The sheer physicality of these performances draws you in but the approach while, yes, certainly 'exciting', tends to sidestep too many musical nooks and crannies.

It may nevertheless be felt that this imaginative variety of sound is less conspicuous at low dynamic levels and in passages of more or less romantic expressiveness. Indeed, at the outset of No 1 I suspected this would be as real a deficiency as it is with the Alban Berg – after all, this work is supposed to be Bartók's 'funeral dirge' for his romance with Stefi Geyer, not a re-creation of its passionate high points. That suspicion is soon dispelled, however – as soon, in fact, as the viola's *appassionato* recitative on the third page.

The performances are compellingly intense and passionate, and by no means

indiscriminately so. But it would be a pity if the Emersons were to eclipse the different merits of the Véghs who conjure up more interesting shadows and probe into more mysterious, intimate corners. Presumably DG's commitment to the Emersons means we will have to wait that much longer for the return of the classic Hungarian Quartet recordings to the catalogue; and the famous earlier mono Végh set on Columbia is no less worthy of reinstatement. But for the moment it is a pleasure to welcome the appearance of what must be one of the most exciting chamber music recordings of recent years. **David Fanning** (12/88)

**Richard Bratby** I hadn't listened to the Emersons' Bartók for a few years, and to be brutally honest, I hadn't really got it mentally filed under 'exciting'. Which just shows how important it is to re-examine one's assumptions. I first encountered this set about a decade after it was released. I was just starting to discover the Bartók quartets, and this was recommended to me as a sort of 'entry-level' interpretation – polished, precise, no-nonsense. Lazily, I never challenged that initial impression. But revisiting it, what jumped straight out were exactly the qualities that Fanning identifies. The incredible clarity, that 'controlled vehemence', and yes, the romantic ardour with which the Emersons open the First Quartet (confession: I rather liked it). The reservations were a little slower in coming – but I have a feeling we'll be talking quite a bit about those nooks and crannies. Would you care to elaborate?

**RC** Passages where the savagery abates and we find ourselves listening for subtler things. Take the Second Quartet's opening movement, from 3'18" where a new theme

appears, violin and viola playing in unison albeit two octaves apart, with drone-like open fifths on the cello and second violin. No question that the Emersons perform this beautifully but switch to the Végh Quartet (their second recording, on Naïve) and the drone sounds tellingly exposed, as if you're eavesdropping on folk players at dead of night. Stay with the Véghs until 5'26" and after some agitated writing the music calms to *sempre molto tranquillo* and Sándor Végh's quietening tone achieves a perfect dip in tension. The Takács are similarly effective at this point. Turn to the Emersons and although Philip Setzer's playing is appealingly warm-textured, there's not the same sense of mystery. Could it be that the democratic policy of sharing the Emerson Quartet's leadership with Eugene Drucker outlaws potential for individuality?

**RB** There's something in that. It might seem the most natural (and, as you say, democratic) idea in the world that the two violinists should just take turns. But Hans Keller gave it short shrift, and the notion that roles within a tight-knit



'Polished, precise, no-nonsense' - but do the Emersons 'sidestep too many musical nooks and crannies' in Bartók?

ensemble can simply be swapped at will becomes more problematic the more you think about it. If anything, the impression I get is that the Emersons overcompensate – striving slightly too hard for a consistency that can easily turn into homogeneity. The central slow movement of the Fourth Quartet is precise, but compared to, say, Paul Szabo of the Végh Quartet on their earlier (mono) recording, David Finckel's cello solo feels self-conscious. And then when the first violin enters at 2'18" – it's Setzer here, too – you get impressive rhythmic accuracy whereas with Végh it's birdsong, it's flickering sparks: something mysterious, and not wholly tamed.

**RC** I agree entirely. I'm thinking back to what you said earlier about the Emersons offering us a sort of 'entry level', and they do just that, but how far beyond the entrance do they take us? Not very far I would say. Years after they recorded the DG set I heard them perform the Second Quartet here in London and the CD suddenly became yesterday's news; the Emersons 'live' had cast off their glad rags, rolled up their sleeves and dirtied their

hands. You quoted Keller, always a combative soul worth returning to, and I recall what he once said about the great Polish violinist Bronisław Huberman being 'half-saint, half-Gipsy'. Huberman never recorded any Bartók but the Véghs did, and they come close enough. Compare them with the Emersons at the half-crazed apex of the Fifth Quartet's first movement (2'15" to 3'30") where the Emersons sound too eager to slash the jugular whereas the Véghs give us a Gipsy-style take on divine madness. They never rush their fences.

**RB** Very true. Of course, there's a big difference between a live performance and a studio recording (and perhaps that difference was more pronounced during the digital boom of the 1980s). And artists evolve: I've not heard the Emersons in concert, but listening to their recent *Berg Lyric Suite*, I certainly didn't feel any of the (putting it bluntly) superficiality we seem to be finding in this Bartók set, and I'm sure that's not solely down to their change of cellist. But still, the fact remains that our colleagues in 1989 felt that this recording deserved a *Gramophone*

Award, and not just for chamber music – this was Recording of the Year, beating Simpson's Ninth Symphony, Abbado's COE Schubert cycle and John McGinn's landmark reconstruction of *Show Boat*. Are we missing something here? Is it simply a question of style, and personal taste? Bartók can't just be a Hungarian speciality, surely?

**RC** Well, we haven't yet mentioned the Juilliards' three sets, the original Fine Arts Quartet on Music & Arts (whose peaty approach most approximates the later Véghs) or the Tokyo Quartet on DG. These in their different ways enter the inner sanctum of Bartók's world without betraying too many textual directives. Both the Fifth and Sixth Quartets include specific timings, the Fifth most generously, and yet very few performances on disc buckle down to split-second accuracy in this respect. Even Bartók himself would bend his own rules in performance and I think that his principal intention was to steer players away from interpretative excess. Having said that, listen to the Amar Quartet in the Second Quartet – as far as I know the first recording ever made of a Bartók Quartet – which Bartók himself must surely have known, a 1927 production with Paul Hindemith playing viola (available on Arbiter or online). That passage with drone-like open fifths on the cello and second violin referred to above is taken at a daringly slow tempo, far slower than any other version I know of. What did Bartók think? Would he have preferred the Amars' daring to the Emersons' bright, collegiate-style enthusiasm? If he would have done then my intuition is seriously adrift.

**RB** Yet Bartók's quartets transcend any one interpretation – and even the composer's directions can't be taken as final. The Emersons bring all the qualities Fanning heard in 1988, plus something that was perhaps rarer then than it is now: sheer sonic beauty. Maybe the lasting value of this set is as a historical document – the moment when it became possible to approach these works not as modernist exotica, but as masterpieces in the classical tradition, capable of being played like Mozart or Schubert. That would explain the impact it made at the time even if, as I think we agree, it feels now like the Emersons were only really beginning to find the soul of this music. Listen to them at the very end of the whole journey; the final bars of the Sixth Quartet. I feel a genuine sense of mystery, of sorrowful dissolution. But it's just a case of too little, too late. **G**

# THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

## Italian Baroque oratorios

With our consumption of oratorios generally stopping at the usual suspects by Bach, Handel et al, **David Vickers** aims to familiarise us with less well-known yet equally extraordinary examples on disc

**T**he term 'oratorio' is immediately associated with perennial favourites such as Bach's Passions, Handel's *Messiah* (1742), Haydn's *The Creation* (1798) and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (1846). Among this Protestant majority the devoutly Catholic Haydn may seem the odd one out, but the use of musical settings of biblical stories or spiritual allegories in order to instruct and edify 'congregations' had firm roots in the cultural life of Counter-Reformation Italy.

Partly arising from ideas sparked by the Council of Trent, singing *laude* became an integral part of 'spiritual exercises' undertaken by lay confraternities in oratories (prayer halls affiliated to neighbouring churches), especially those

instituted in Rome by St Philip Neri and his Congregazione dell'Oratorio. These meetings proved so popular that in the 1570s the Philippian 'Oratorians' were given the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, which they rebuilt (with the involvement of Borromini) as the Chiesa Nuova, with its oratorio next door. It was here that Emilio de' Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo* was performed twice in February 1600. This fully staged allegorical music drama was not quite the same kettle of fish as the slightly more didactic and unstaged oratorios that proceeded to become popular among numerous pious societies in Rome.

The earliest documented use of the term 'oratorio' to describe a musical work

(rather than its venue) was in 1640, and soon these religious entertainments spread to oratories in Florence, Ferrara, Modena, Bologna and Venice. From the outset there were different kinds of works: *oratorio volgare* featured sung texts in vernacular Italian (the form preferred at the Chiesa Nuova), whereas *oratorio latino* was cultivated for the more educated, aristocratic-leaning congregations. Later in the 17th century there was even the *oratorio erotico*, which skirted close to the bounds of acceptability in its depictions of wicked seductresses, or virtuous women whose chastity is threatened by lustful hypocrites.

It is hardly surprising that the musical and poetic characteristics of the genre mirrored contemporary developments in secular staged opera. This kinship between musico-dramatic forms for the theatre and the oratory continued in early 18th-century Italy, as is instantly apparent in the religious dramas composed for princely patrons by Alessandro Scarlatti and the young Handel – whose first two oratorios were both written during his years in Rome. The admirable qualities and variety of forms within Italian oratorios from composers ranging from Carissimi to Vivaldi has yielded a vast discography produced by a broad church of Baroque specialists, so my selective survey is just the tip of the iceberg. **G**



Rome's Oratorio dei Filippini – with its façade by Borromini – was built next door to the Chiesa Nuova (seen on the far right)



**Vivaldi**  
**Juditha triumphans**  
Soloists; The King's Consort /  
Robert King  
Hyperion (5/98)

Vivaldi's only surviving oratorio was probably first performed in November 1716 at Venice's Ospedale della Pietà, it depicts how the cunning and seductive heroine Judith (omitted from the Protestant Old Testament) gains the trust of Assyrian general Holofernes, lulls him to sleep and decapitates him - thereby liberating Bethulia. This honed performance captures the diversity of exotic instrumentation, charming melodicism and moments of staggering theatricality.



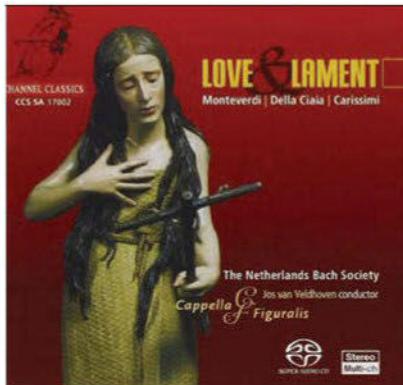
**Caldara**  
**Maddalena ai piedi di Cristo**  
Soloists; Schola Cantorum  
Basiensi / René Jacobs  
Harmonia Mundi (11/96)

This work was probably performed for the Oratorians at Santa Maria della Consolazione in Caldara's native Venice in c1697-8. This Gramophone Award-winner is one of René Jacobs's most vital recordings and it helped to catapult Andreas Scholl (Celestial Love) to stardom; Bernarda Fink (Earthly Love) and Gerd Türk (Christ) are no slouches either, but Maria Cristina Kiehr steals the show as the penitent Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Jesus.



**Stradella**  
**San Giovanni Battista**  
Soloists, Harmonices Mundi /  
Claudio Astronio  
Stradivarius

This *oratorio erotico* was first performed on Palm Sunday 1675 at the Oratorio della Pietà, Rome. Stradella's pioneering *concerto grosso* instrumentation is used in imaginatively varied arias and ensembles. Herod's pompous vanity, complacent lasciviousness and guilt are astutely characterised, and Salome veers beguilingly between seductive and vindictive demands for John the Baptist's head. Detailed psychological characterisations abound in this poignant version.



**Handel**  
**La Resurrezione**  
Soloists; Contrasto Armonico /  
Marco Vitale  
Brilliant Classics (9/09)

Handel's second oratorio, this was hosted at enormous expense by the Marquis Ruspoli at his Roman palazzo on Easter Sunday, 1708; Corelli led the large orchestra and the hall was decorated lavishly for the occasion. Other recordings boast starrer singers or pack a firmer punch of theatrical colours, but in many respects Contrasto Armonico's unforced pensiveness is more poetic, and Vitale consistently makes convincing choices regarding important small details.



**Pistocchi**  
**Il martirio di San Adriano**  
Soloists; Compagnia de  
Musici / Francesco Baroni  
Pan Classics

Many works provided for the Oratorio di San Carlo Rotondo in Modena benefited from the patronage of the musical Duke Francesco II d'Este. Pistocchi's *Il martirio di San Adriano* (1692) is jam-packed with fantastic music, brought to life in this expert performance: Adriano's lament 'Come lagrima il cigno dolente' is a tuneful dialogue with a pair of mellifluous cellos; his consoling wife Natalia's 'Caro Dio si dolce sei' aligns sure melodic vocal sense with the strings' sublime dissonances.



**Marazzoli**  
**Oratorio di Santa Caterina**  
Atalante / Erin Headley *lirone*  
Nimbus Alliance (10/12)

At the core of this work, composed in Rome c1660, is a Roman soldier who pities the sufferings of St Catherine of Alexandria on the torture wheel; his lament 'Piango la tua sventura' is accompanied by a *lirone* - an instrument favoured in mid-17th-century Italy for illustrating moments of profound pathos. The oratorio concludes with the martyr's 'Caro sposo' (the title of the CD), sung with poetic nuance and blissful sweetness by Katherine Watson.



**A Scarlatti**  
**Sedecia, re di Gerusalemme**  
Il Seminario Musicale /  
Gérard Lesne *counterten*  
Virgin Veritas (1/02)

None of Scarlatti's oratorios are more compellingly operatic in nature than *Sedecia*. Probably first performed c1703-4 at Rome's Chiesa Nuova, when Scarlatti was briefly the Oratorian's assistant *maestro di cappella*, this fully fledged music drama recounts the doom of the last Judean king Zedekiah (Lesne) at the hands of the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar (Peter Harvey); there is a spine-tingling death scene for Zedekiah's son Ismaele (Philippe Jaroussky).



**Ferrari**  
**Il Sansone**  
Soloists; Il Complesso  
Barocco / Alan Curtis  
Virgin Classics (A/00)

Ferrari was music director of Monteverdi's late Venetian operas, and this *oratorio erotico* (Modena, 1680) came nearly 40 years later. Roberta Invernizzi's alluring Delilah makes mincemeat of Carlo Lepore's gullible Samson; Il Complesso Barocco elicit every drop of emotion from this moral tale - especially the strings' languorous augmented sixths and chromatic touches that accompany Passion's poor advice that Samson should cave in to erotic temptation.



**attrib Rossi**  
**Oratorio per  
la Settimana Santa**  
Les Arts Florissants /  
William Christie  
Harmonia Mundi (10/89)

The earliest-known Passion oratorio dates from early-1640s Rome, and might be by Luigi Rossi. A crowd calls for Barabbas, Pilate washes his hands, and the Crucifixion is conveyed by a conflict between jeering demons and the dolorous Virgin Mary. Christie's demons here veer too far into comical caricature, but the Virgin's piercingly beautiful lament is sung with sweet sincerity, dignity and stylistic acumen by Agnès Mellon.

## Carissimi

**Jepthe** Cappella Figuralis; Netherlands Bach Society / Jos van Veldhoven  
Channel Classics

This is the first bona fide masterpiece of oratorio. The date, occasion and scale of the original performance in Rome are unknown, but it must have been before 1650, when parts of it were cited by theorist Athanasius Kircher in praise of Carissimi's ability to move 'the minds of listeners to whatever affection he wishes'. The dramatic treatment of the tragic story of Jephtha and the

fate of his daughter, and, in particular, the plangent six-voice final chorus ('Plorate, filii Israel') had a direct influence on Charpentier and Handel. The juxtaposition of moralising didacticism, inconsolable grief and tenderness are sculpted to Bernini-like perfection by the soloist ensemble of the Netherlands Bach Society.

# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## *Shostakovich's Symphony No 10*

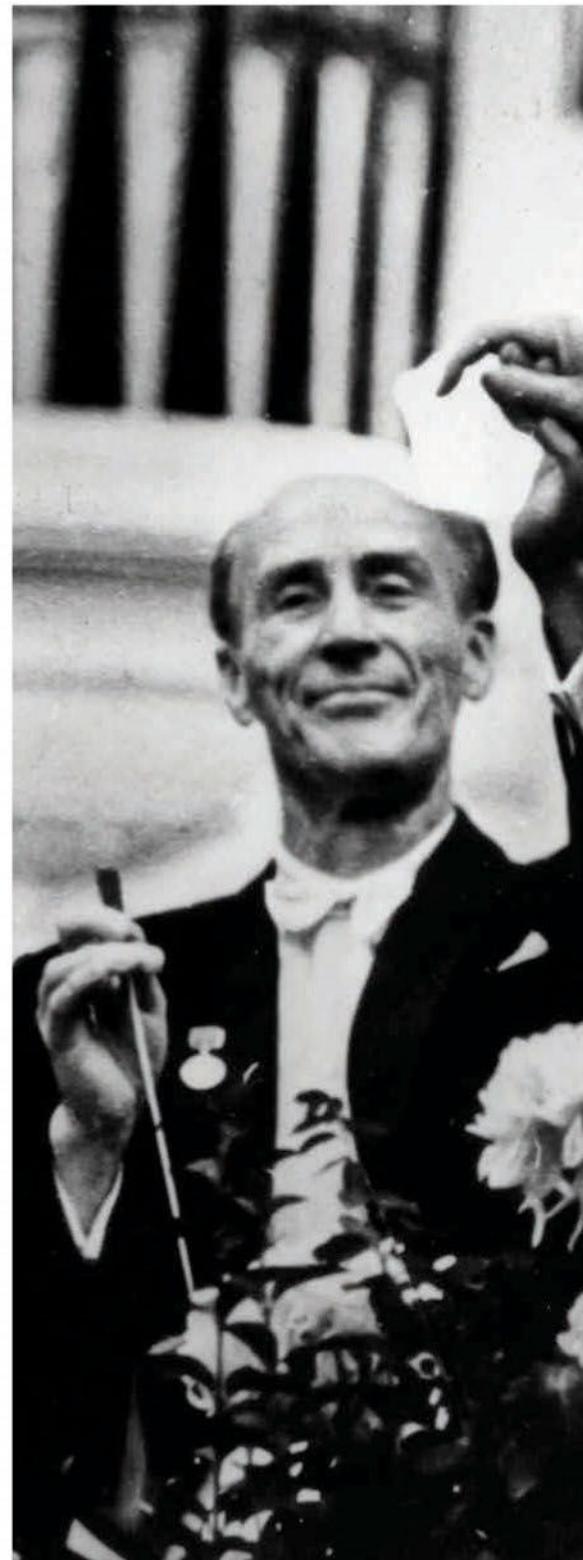
Love it or hate it, the work has attracted countless interpreters – from both the East and the West. **David Gutman** relishes these aural riches

Could this be Shostakovich's greatest symphony? It was certainly one of his more immediately successful. *The World's Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music: Third Supplement 1953-1955* (1957) lists recordings by **Efrem Kurtz** and the Philharmonia, Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic, Yevgeny Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic, and Franz Konwitschny and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (1954; Berlin Classics); there's even a pirate issue of the Mravinsky (subsequently re-released with various degrees of legitimacy) credited to the composer himself. Not everyone enthused. Reviewing a reissue of the Kurtz, *Gramophone* critic Trevor Harvey considered 'the first movement faceless music; the second, just fast and completely undistinguished...As a compelling symphony it doesn't impress me at all' (11/66). Today the work lies at the heart of the repertoire, and both diligent collectors used to dodging the deletions axe and aficionados of YouTube are able to trace its recording history. For instance, a typically nervy, quick-fire realisation of the four-hand piano reduction played by the composer himself with Mieczyslaw Weinberg dates from February 1954 (Monopole, A/07 – nla) and can be heard on YouTube.

### **SHOSTAKOVICH - FOR OR AGAINST?**

But what to make of the piece – or of Shostakovich himself? Not since Wagner

has a composer's reception history been so bitterly contested. Creative figures as disparate as Robin Holloway and the late Pierre Boulez may have earned the right to rail against what they heard, respectively, as 'battleship-grey...factory-functional... music without inner musical necessity' (*The Spectator*, 2000) and 'third-pressing Mahler'. More surprising is the relish with which armchair sympathisers have torn into each other. Part of the problem is that senior Western critics long ignored Shostakovich as they did most modern music with tunes and key signatures. For some 15 years David Fanning's formal study of the Tenth remained the only English-language publication dedicated to the analysis of Shostakovich's music. Nature abhors a vacuum, and the gap was filled by the dodgy dossiers of Soviet émigrés and our own popular journalists, who often attributed to the embattled composer a 'heroic' public persona out of sync with available evidence. To assume that Shostakovich always composed either 'for' or 'against' the system is too simple when the semantic indeterminacy of music is the very essence of its freedom. There were other concerns: emotional entanglements, drink, football, family. As the opening bars of the Tenth grind inexorably forward, first evoking then transcending the drab realities of the everyday, we can dare to hope for a better, brighter future. Then again, we're not obliged to accept that notion any more than



the work's myriad interpreters, whose numbers far exceed those discussed here.

### **SO WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

We assume that the Tenth was set down in response to Stalin's death in 1953, yet pianist Tatyana Nikolayeva insisted that it was completed in 1951 and withheld during the post-1948 ideological campaign against formalism. Whatever the case and however



Shostakovich (right) joins Mravinsky for the 1961 premiere of Symphony No 12 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra; in total, Mravinsky premiered six of Shostakovich's symphonies – including the Tenth, again in Leningrad, in 1953

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARKA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

the music is paced, it's hard to see its vast opening movement as anything other than an exercise in abstraction, a masterly demonstration of long-term build-up and decay. Here are the extended phrases defining the breath of a symphonist, as that phrase might be understood in the West. Even this is something of an illusion since the movement's perkier second subject group, introduced by the flute,

is drawn from the aborted violin sonata of 1945.

The short, violent second-movement *scherzo* is often described as 'a musical portrait of Stalin', although the only verifiable source for this is *Testimony* (1979), the much-disputed Shostakovich memoir supposedly 'communicated' to Solomon Volkov. Several of the composer's acquaintances keep the handbrake on,

whatever their attitude to the Stalin myth. Mstislav Rostropovich, a sceptic, and Kurt Sanderling, a believer, are both a little limp; **Rudolf Barshai** draws greater menace through tighter discipline. **Yevgeny Mravinsky**, on the other hand, had the technical mastery to break the four-minute barrier without loss of power. Which is not to say that a dictator's abuses are somehow exposed by either approach. We need to be suspicious



Shostakovich and Karajan in Moscow for the Berlin Phil's 1969 Russian tour (a live recording survives)

of pseudo-political point-scoring. When a critic avers that Stalin might have enjoyed **Herbert von Karajan**'s rendering of his 'portrait' isn't that just another kind of prejudice? In fact, Karajan's Moscow relay of 1969 (discussed below) is among the most inflammable and desperate-sounding. Mravinsky may top him but only just, and sadly the most ubiquitous transfer of his own March 3, 1976 recording is missing a bit of the first movement's opening bar.

That Mravinsky (who directed the Leningrad premiere on December 17, 1953 and a clutch of mostly live recordings) misinterpreted the horn calls of the enigmatic *Allegretto* as alluding to himself was confirmed by Sanderling. Their resemblance to Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* can't be accidental either, even if we now know that they encode the name of Shostakovich's ex-pupil and sometime inamorata Elmira Nazirova. Does that revelation change how we hear this warily capricious musical discourse or make it easier to bring off? Identifying Shostakovich's ciphers takes us only so far. The other key element is, of course, the

composer's own DSCH motivic signature, D-E flat-C-B (D-Es-C-H in German notation). Deliberately or not, the cheerless closing texture of Myaskovsky's 13th is reprised in the movement's fade-out.

After an introduction in which pale sunlight never quite breaks through the gloom, the mood of frustrated self-assertion is swept aside as the finale escapes into the boisterous bonhomie of the football terrace, with DSCH reigning triumphant at the close. However, like Fanning, you may hear the movement as a whole in a more hysterical light. Andris Nelsons (discussed below) is unusual in allowing the music to recapture the reflective mood of the opening when the pulse slackens.

Most listeners feel that the Tenth has a double purpose: to satisfy as a universal entity while encapsulating implicit messages of personal identity and integrity. We can't be sure that the discourse is intended to carry the weight of meaning we associate with it, but no matter. Authenticity is always in the ear of the listener. One example: the 50-minute playing time specified in the printed score

is exceeded by almost all the recordings considered here! Another imponderable: does this work require sandblasting Soviet brass to make its impact? I'd say no. The woodwind solos Nelsons extracts from his Boston forces are surpassingly eloquent, not doggedly idiomatic. Most engaged Western interpreters do make some attempt to Russify the sound of their ensembles, though – Karajan included.

### EARLY RECORDINGS

Of the initial cluster of mono releases, the best technically is **Karel Ančerl**'s, the product of studio sessions with the Czech Philharmonic in Munich's Herkulessaal. Only the (rather wonderful) halfway-house sonority of the winds and brass marks this out as the product of a bygone age. Like all its 1950s rivals, the performance moves faster than we expect today.

**Dimitri Mitropoulos**, suppler in the first movement, loses points by rushing his fences later on; **Yevgeny Mravinsky** (1954) has not yet acquired the stiff-backed efficiency that blights some of his later tapings. Fleet and unfussy, Ančerl makes everything flow naturally without awkward corners, so some will judge the results less exciting. This conductor knew what it was to survive the camps (Hitler's, not Stalin's), but melodrama and self-indulgence were alien to his nature, notwithstanding the apocryphal cymbal clash with which he brings down the curtain. The mono recording is remarkably firm and true, the orchestral discipline outstanding.

Not for a decade did a worthy rival appear in the form of **Herbert von Karajan**'s analogue stereo recording (1966), which has remained at or near the top of the pile ever since. It is weightier yet never sluggish, with a famously architectural take on what was for him, as Richard Osborne assures us, 'another great representative work of the age'. That does not preclude expressive interventions like the smoochily ascending violins towards fig 2 (from 0'56"). More characteristic is the tendency to make transitions almost imperceptible. The first indicated gear change to *crochet*=108 (at 2'16") is actually meant to precede the clarinet entry at fig 5 (the solo isn't exactly *simple* here, either); still, it's difficult to

### THE CLASSIC CHOICE

**BPO / Karajan (1966)** DG M 429 716-2GGA



In higher fi than his coruscating Moscow performance and available in physical format, Karajan's earlier studio recording remains a fascinating document.

### ALTERNATIVE AUTHENTICITY

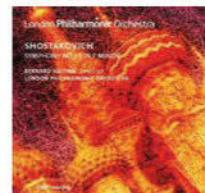
**Berlin SO / Sanderling (1977)** Berlin Classics



⑤ 0092172BC  
This is a thoughtful alternative for those who distrust interpretative theatrics and tend to find rival recordings overblown.

### A DIFFERENT MODEL

**LPO / Haitink (1986)** LPO M LPO0034



Haitink and the London Philharmonic Orchestra perfect their broad-spectrum interpretation in the larger-than-life acoustic of London's Royal Albert Hall.

condemn the sophistication when the aim is true and the desolate piccolos at the end of the movement are actually in tune. (Russians are more likely to treat the arrival of new material as meriting a theatrical flourish, but perhaps we shouldn't generalise: **Mstislav Rostropovich** sees much of the movement as cowed and inflexible.)

Karajan took this work to the Soviet Union in 1969 and a live Moscow recording survives. It takes a little longer to get going and there are some blips from the horn before the sense of occasion ceases to be an inhibiting factor, provoking instead an extra degree of intensity. We're reminded that there are human beings grappling with the score. Mariss Jansons recalls an occasion on which 'they played at 200 per cent capacity. It was unbelievable.' Yes, the sound is harsh and percussive (the microphones leave the strings to fend for themselves), but Karajan's detractors need to experience the bullish immediacy and absence of sonic plush. In both versions the ferocity of the *scherzo* is such that you sense even this ensemble on the verge of losing its grip. The digital remake (1981) is marginally less convincing, with some instrumental blunders the younger Karajan would no doubt have retaken. Nonetheless, he is much better at the equivocal third movement than the numerous hi-tech aspirants following in his wake. The finale goes careering over the cliff, the timpanist losing count of his DSCHs at the very end. The sound is the best of the three, the spacious-sounding analogue version having acquired a tendency to blare.

#### THE SOVIET-RUSSIAN LINE

On release, the main competitor to Karajan's initial issue was another 1966 recording by Evgeni Svetlanov (HMV Melodiya, 10/68 – nla), first in a line of state-sponsored Soviet-Russian tapings in more or less heavily manipulated stereo whose disappearance has left the work's discography looking curiously anaemic (in physical format). The frenetic version from **Kyrill Kondrashin**, the first to record all 15 symphonies, is available as a download. More deliberate in matters of pacing, **Gennady Rozhdestvensky** and **Svetlanov** himself are represented by excellent, albeit lo-fi concert relays. Svetlanov's London Prom (1968) was scheduled just hours after Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia, crushing the liberalising Prague Spring. The atmosphere is palpably tense, the piece launched amid shouts of protest. It has been suggested that the conductor went on to give the performance of his life. I'm not so sure. This is music-making in primary colours, oddly one-dimensional, fascinating



Gergiev conducts his Mariinsky forces in 2013

though it is to revisit the brutal power and timbral specificity of an archetypally Soviet band. The shadowy third movement feels too swift, lacking inwardness. Svetlanov's party-line positivism suits the finale better:

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### DATE / ARTISTS

1954	New York PO / <b>Mitropoulos</b>
1954	Leningrad PO / <b>Mravinsky</b>
1955	Czech PO / <b>Ánčerl</b>
1955	Philh Orch / <b>Kurtz</b>
1966	BPO / <b>Karajan</b>
1968	USSR St SO / <b>Svetlanov</b>
1969	BPO / <b>Karajan</b>
1973	Moscow Philh SO / <b>Kondrashin</b>
1973	Leningrad PO / <b>Temirkanov</b>
1974	Bournemouth SO / <b>Berglund</b>
1976	Leningrad PO / <b>Mravinsky</b>
1977	LPO / <b>Haitink</b>
1977	Berlin SO / <b>K Sanderling</b>
1981	BPO / <b>Karajan</b>
1982	Ministry of Culture SO / <b>Rozhdestvensky</b>
1985	Philh Orch / <b>Rattle</b>
1986	LPO / <b>Haitink</b>
1988	RSNO / <b>N Järvi</b>
1989	LSO / <b>Rostropovich</b>
1990	RPO / <b>Ashkenazy</b>
1990	Cleveland Orch / <b>Dohnányi</b>
1990	LSO / <b>M Shostakovich</b>
1990	Hallé Orch / <b>Skrowaczewski</b>
1990	Chicago SO / <b>Solti</b>
1994	Philadelphia Orch / <b>Jansons</b>
1996	WDR SO, Cologne / <b>Barshai</b>
1997	BBC NOW / <b>M Wigglesworth</b>
2005	WDR SO, Cologne / <b>Bychkov</b>
2008	Cincinnati SO / <b>P Järvi</b>
2009	RCO / <b>Jansons</b>
2009	RLPO / <b>V Petrenko</b>
2009	Verbier Fest Orch / <b>Temirkanov</b>
2013	Mariinsky Orch / <b>Gergiev</b>
2015	Boston SO / <b>Nelsons</b>

### RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)

Urania	©	►	URN22 437 (7/55 <sup>th</sup> )			
Naxos	©	►	9 80578 (6/92 <sup>th</sup> )			
DG	©	463 666-2GOR (9/56 <sup>th</sup> )	Naxos	©	►	9 80302
			Testament	©	SBT1078 (2/56 <sup>th</sup> )	
DG	©	429 716-2GGA (1/69 <sup>th</sup> , 8/90)				
			ICA	©	ICAC5036 (12/11)	
Melodiya	©	►	MELCD100 1513 (7/09)			
Melodiya	©	►	MELCD10 01065 (4/07)			
Russian Disc	©	►	RDCD11195 (1/94)			
Warner	©	⑯	019255-2 (3/76 <sup>th</sup> , 1/14)			
Warner	©	⑯	2564 69890-5 (6/92 <sup>th</sup> )			
Decca	©	⑦	478 1429DC7, ⑧ 475 7413DC11 (10/77 <sup>th</sup> )			
Berlin Classics	©	⑤	0092172BC (9/90)			
DG	©	477 5909GOR (3/82 <sup>th</sup> )				
Brilliant	©	③	9273 (4/10 <sup>th</sup> )			
EMI	©	⑧	697597-2 (9/86 <sup>th</sup> , 3/94 <sup>th</sup> )			
LPO	©	⑧	LPO00034 (A/08)			
Chandos	©	►	CHAN8630 (3/89)			
Warner	©	⑫	2564 64177-2 (3/92 <sup>th</sup> )			
Decca	©	⑫	475 8748DC12 (1/92 <sup>th</sup> )			
Decca	©	⑧	430 844-2DH (9/92)			
Alto	©	⑧	ALC1083 (1/91 <sup>th</sup> ); ⑨ ⑥ ALC6004			
Hallé	©	②	CDHLD7511 (10/91 <sup>th</sup> )			
Decca	©	⑧	433 0732DH (6/92)			
EMI	©	⑩	365300-2 (6/95 <sup>th</sup> )			
Brilliant	©	⑪	6324			
BIS	©	②	BIS-CD973/4 (9/99)			
Avie	©	►	AV2137 (1/08)			
Telarc	©	►	CD80702 (6/09)			
RCO Live	©	►	RCO13001 (8/13)			
Naxos	©	⑧	572461 (1/11); ⑨ ⑪ 8 501111			
Ideale Audience Int'l	©	►	DVD 307 9138 (12/10)			
ArtHaus	©	⑧	DVD 107 551; ④ ► 107 552 (10/15)			
DG	©	479 5059GH (8/15)				

he always played its quiet opening with poetry and finesse, and certainly brings the house down thereafter.

By the time of Valery Polyansky (Chandos, 3/01) the special urgency of the Russian tradition appears to have dissipated altogether. The erratic **Yuri Temirkanov**, rough and raw live in the 1970s, strikes few sparks on DVD with a student orchestra at the 2009 Verbier Festival. **Valery Gergiev**, the most obvious wearer of the nationalist mantle, has a superior audio-visual account filmed in Paris with his own *echt* Russian band. While his fluttery semaphore elicits a more inspiring response than the traffic-cop antics of his senior colleague, the results seem cautious and *legato* alongside the incendiary, unblended stuff exported by the Communist state.

### BIG NAMES...AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

One of relatively few to combine incontrovertible authenticity of experience with a more reflective approach, **Kurt Sanderling** first encountered Shostakovich in wartime Siberia, having

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THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER & SUNDAY 9 APRIL

## Brussels Philharmonic

Jérôme Pernoo CELLO | Stéphane Denève CONDUCTOR

Beethoven SYMPHONY NO. 6 (PASTORAL) | Connexion  
FLAMMENSCHRIFT; E CHIARO NELLA VALLE IL FIUME APPARE |  
Respighi PINES OF ROME

Connexion MASLENITSA | Prokofiev SINFONIA CONCERTANTE |  
Rachmaninov SYMPHONIC DANCES

TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER

## Spanish Symphony Orchestra

Craig Ogden GUITAR | Grzegorz Nowak CONDUCTOR

Giménez LA BODA DE LUIS ALONSO | Rodrigo CONCIERTO  
DE ARANJUEZ | Falla EL AMOR BRUJO – RITUAL FIRE DANCE |  
Mendelssohn SYMPHONY NO. 4 (ITALIAN)

MONDAY 10 OCTOBER

## Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra

Pavel Kolesnikov PIANO | Vladimir Fedoseyev CONDUCTOR

Borodin POLOVTSIAN DANCES | Tchaikovsky PIANO CONCERTO  
NO. 1 | Tchaikovsky SYMPHONY NO. 6 (PATHÉTIQUE)

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER

## Czech National Symphony Orchestra

Natalie Clein CELLO | Libor Pešek CONDUCTOR

Smetana MÁ VLAST – FROM BOHEMIA'S WOODS AND FIELDS |  
Dvořák CELLO CONCERTO | Dvořák SYMPHONY NO. 8

MONDAY 28 NOVEMBER

## Zurich Chamber Orchestra

Gabriela Montero PIANO | Alison Balsom TRUMPET

Mozart SYMPHONY NO. 33 | Hummel TRUMPET CONCERTO |  
Mozart PIANO CONCERTO NO. 14 IN E FLAT | Shostakovich  
CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND TRUMPET

FRIDAY 20 JANUARY

## Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra

Truls Mørk CELLO | Edward Gardner CONDUCTOR

Grieg PEER GYNT SUITE NO. 1 | Elgar CELLO CONCERTO |  
Bartók CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

SUNDAY 26 & TUESDAY 28 FEBRUARY, THURSDAY 2 MARCH

## Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra

Angela Hewitt PIANO | Alexander Sitkovetsky VIOLIN |  
Emma Johnson CLARINET | Yutaka Sado CONDUCTOR

Mozart THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO OVERTURE | Beethoven  
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 4 | Dvořák SYMPHONY NO. 9 (FROM THE  
NEW WORLD)

Mendelssohn THE HEBRIDES OVERTURE; VIOLIN CONCERTO |  
Sibelius SYMPHONY NO. 2

Schubert SYMPHONY NO. 8 (UNFINISHED) | Mozart  
CLARINET CONCERTO | Brahms SYMPHONY NO. 1

FRIDAY 17 MARCH

## Norwegian Chamber Orchestra

Leif Ove Andsnes DIRECTOR/PIANO

Prokofiev 'CLASSICAL' SYMPHONY | Mozart PIANO CONCERTOS:  
NO. 20 IN D MINOR; NO. 22 IN E FLAT MAJOR | Grieg  
HOLBERG SUITE

FRIDAY 31 MARCH

## Dresden Philharmonic

Elin Pritchard SOPRANO | Samantha Price MEZZO-SOPRANO |  
Alexander James Edwards TENOR | Thomas Faulkner BASS |  
Michael Sanderling CONDUCTOR

Beethoven SYMPHONY NO. 1; SYMPHONY NO. 9 (CHORAL)

THURSDAY 18 MAY

## Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra

Freddy Kempf PIANO | Yuri Simonov CONDUCTOR

Tchaikovsky SUITE FROM SWAN LAKE | Rachmaninov  
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 | Shostakovich SYMPHONY NO. 6

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Letting the music speak for itself: Petrenko, here leading the RLPO at a Shostakovich 10 Prom in 2012

fled Hitler's Germany for Stalin's Utopia. They remained close until the conductor's departure for East Germany in 1960. For Sanderling, the 'Haydn-esque' finale speaks of Shostakovich's 'lightness and even dance-like gaiety, as if he wanted to greet the dawn of a new [post-Stalinist] day': his music-making has rarely sounded so free of intellectual constraint as he ensures that DSCH comes through loud and clear. Further West, where many big-name maestros were still avoiding Soviet repertoire, it was bold of the young Andrew Davis to engage with this music in typically forthright fashion (Classics for Pleasure, 5/75 – nla). Whether achieved by the meticulous marking-up of score and parts or a balder literalism, a note of high seriousness was struck by **Paavo Berglund** and **Bernard Haitink**. The latter's dark-hued studio recording (1977) proved particularly influential, adding Brahmsian richness to available interpretative options, sometimes at the expense of drive. **Simon Rattle**, in a rare early disappointment, is almost as slow as **Maxim Shostakovich**, the composer's son, his dangerously discontinuous first movement more *adagio* than *moderato*. An editing fault on early copies of Rattle's LP perhaps reflected a lack of concentration. More compelling is Haitink's lately disinterred 1986 Prom. The *scherzo* isn't immediately together, but the remaining movements offer high-voltage organicism at tempos now considered mainstream. For once the wild applause feels justified.

Next came a boom in recordings occasioned not only by the advent of digital

sonics but also by the realignment of Shostakovich's image in the West. Given that so many were made by figures previously indifferent if not actively hostile to Soviet cultural production it is not surprising that their survival rate is patchy, notwithstanding a general rise in playing standards. There's something to be said for the striking polish of **Christoph von Dohnányi**'s Cleveland Orchestra, less for the hit-and-miss immediacy of **Georg Solti**'s Chicagoans. A highly regarded live account from **Stanisław Skrowaczewski** and the Hallé is on surer ground interpretatively if lacking the heft of its American rivals. Of more recent advocates **Mark Wigglesworth**, a longstanding Shostakovich devotee whose vision of the work is among the bleakest, wrings exceptional results from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. The woodwind never chortle where they need to bite, though some hear the extremes of dynamic (partly attributable to BIS's production style) as overly theatrical.

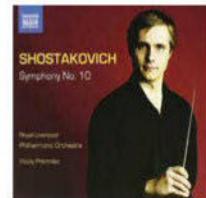
#### COMPLEMENTARY HYBRIDS

The most durable trend has been for mix-and-match projects in which maestros from the old Soviet bloc front more or less prestigious Western ensembles. **Vladimir Ashkenazy**'s serviceable RPO is outshone by the RSNO for **Neeme Järvi**. Captured in larger-than-life, slightly distanced sonics, that sharply focused reading is convincing throughout. (Twenty years on, **Paavo Järvi** followed

in his father's footsteps with a sleeker, shallower conception from Cincinnati). Also outstanding is **Mariss Jansons** in Philadelphia. Here the Soviet legacy is less apparent than the conductor's all-round skill as orchestral conjurer. His broadening of the tail end of the first movement's central climax (from fig 51), a tactic employed variously by Mravinsky, Mitropoulos, André Previn (EMI, 4/83) and others, suggests a reluctance to have the wave of tension recede as abruptly as the composer intends. More worrying is a certain lack of intensity, more apparent in his (unhelpfully) gorgeous Concertgebouw remake. **Semyon Bychkov**, leaner and strikingly articulate, delivers a 'symphonic' performance at odds with the speculative extramusical baggage of the accompanying booklet.

Two recent releases may be the last from conductors vocationally fast-tracked within the fading Soviet system. **Andris Nelsons**, live in Boston in 2015, abandons the garish immediacy of his CBSO *Leningrad* Symphony, but you'll need to forgive DG's strapline 'Under Stalin's Shadow', and the occasional questionable balance. Nelsons's own instrument, the trumpet, is sometimes oddly reticent in a slow-burn opening movement, full of exhausted foreboding. Nelsons may plumb deeper than his mentor Jansons in what is a reading of enormous promise, but shouldn't we opt for a brisker, tauter version? In Julian Barnes's 2016 novel *The Noise of Time*, a fictionalised Shostakovich consoles himself with the notion that his death will begin the process of liberating his music from biographical static. **Vasily Petrenko** points the way with a mainstream rendition that lets the music speak for itself (whatever that means to you) without lapsing into routine. While the recorded sound may not be sumptuous, it strikes a consistent balance between clarity and spaciousness, letting every contrapuntal detail through. There's an almost gritty quality to the Russified string-playing and some spectacular contributions from the horn. No doubt Shostakovich would have been delighted to find the first movement paced à la Karajan, with the RLPO playing out of its collective skin for a Leningradian football fan. New listeners start here. **©**

#### THE (TOP) CHOICE TO LIVE WITH RLPO / V Petrenko (2009)



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Ferociously articulate, Petrenko's objective, unglamorised view won't spoil you for more radical alternatives. This is a Tenth to live with.

# PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

The BBC Proms swing by the Roundhouse, Opera Australia beams Puccini's *Turandot* around the world from Sydney, and we review two operas on The Opera Platform

## Roundhouse, London & BBC Radio 3

BBC Proms Ligeti and Haas to the Roundhouse, August 20

This year the BBC Proms returns to Camden's Roundhouse for the first time since a series of concerts in the 1970s and early 1980s, and we're drawing your attention to this one from London Sinfonietta, conducted by Andrew Gourlay. Its programme includes Sir Harrison Birtwistle's *The Message*, the world premiere of *April/March*, a BBC co-commission from David Sawer, the UK premiere of Georg Friedrich Haas's *Open Spaces II*, and Ligeti's *Ramifications*, which should work particularly well in the Roundhouse with its requirement for two groups of spatially positioned strings. [roundhouse.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/proms](http://roundhouse.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/proms)

## Lincoln Center, New York & online

Two-piano jazz at the Mostly Mozart Festival, August 22

The Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival is currently in full swing, and their relaxed 'A Little Night Music' series is especially tempting, offering hour-long candlelit concerts with complimentary wine, high up in the Stanley H Kaplan Penthouse. If you can't get there, you can still enjoy the music-making and a good dose of atmosphere via the live streams, which remain online afterwards. This particular concert features master improvisers and pianists Cory Smythe and Craig Taborn from the International Contemporary Ensemble, in a genre-surfing, two-piano programme blending the worlds of classical and modern jazz. They're joined for one piece by fellow ICE member, trumpeter Peter Evans.

[mostlymozart.org](http://mostlymozart.org)

## Ambras Castle, Innsbruck & online

Cesti Singing Competition final,

August 26

The Innsbruck Festival of Early Music (July 19 – August 27) turns 40 this year. Highlights include the festival's Artistic Director Alessandro De Marchi conducting Cimarosa's comic opera, *Il matrimonio segreto* with a cast to include baritone Renato Girolami, *buffo* bass Donato di Stefano and mezzo Vesselina Kasarova. Also on the programme is the opera *Le nozze in sogno*, only recently identified as being by Innsbruck's court composer Cesti. The festival will also host the Cesti Singing Competition for Baroque Opera, open to young singers from all over the world, with the competition final streamed live on the festival's website.

[altemusik.at/en](http://altemusik.at/en)

## ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

Barbara Hannigan is mesmerising in Debussy's masterpiece from Aix



### Debussy

If you need a good plumber, ask Katie Mitchell. Set designs for her highly anticipated *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, now available to stream on The Opera Platform, include her usual obsession with water features: here, a fully working bathroom plus a derelict swimming pool for the 'well' in which Mélisande splashes.

This is Barbara Hannigan's show, her Mélisande ever present. Sprawled across a bed in her bridal gown, she returns from the bathroom to find the bedroom transformed into a forest, Golaud prowling with a rifle. Mélisande, sometimes invisible to other characters (including her double), weaves through a crumbling mansion. Split-screen sets – another Mitchell tic – take us to a dining room, a spiral

fire escape, a dank underground corridor, a pool...transformations made with cinematic ease.

Hannigan's silvery-voiced, fragile Mélisande entrances all; Franz-Josef Selig's refined Arkel and Laurent Naouri's menacing Golaud both sniff her hair, while Stéphane Degout's vulnerable Pélleas is strangely childlike in her presence. There are hypnotic moments – Hannigan has the most expressive eyes and poetic arms – and even the 'it-was-all-a-dream' device doesn't feel like the cop-out our teachers would berate us for employing. Esa-Pekka Salonen spins magical playing from the Philharmonia. Highly recommended. **Mark Pullinger**

Available to view for free throughout Europe (except in Russia and Turkey) until January 6, 2017, at [theoperaplatform.eu](http://theoperaplatform.eu)

## Grieg Hall, Bergen & online

Edward Gardner conducts Vaage and Elgar, September 1

This is Edward Gardner's first full season as the Bergen Philharmonic's Chief Conductor, and the live-streamed season-opening concert blends Norwegian and British heritage. Opening with *Tjat* (or 'Chatter'), by Bergen's own Knut Vaage, there then follows Elgar's Cello Concerto with Truls Mørk; the concert ends with Mahler's

Symphony No 5. For those actually in Bergen, don't miss the post-concert recital in the foyer. [digitalconcerthall.no](http://digitalconcerthall.no)

## National Concert Hall, Dublin & RTÉ lyric fm

RTÉ Concert Orchestra celebrates music written for the new Raidió Éireann orchestras, September 14

From September 7 to 25, RTÉ and the National Concert Hall Dublin will together

present a major festival, 'Composing the Island: A century of music in Ireland 1916–2016'. All 27 concerts can be heard on RTÉ lyric fm, including a live broadcast of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra's performance on September 14. This concert will feature a selection of Irish music written in the 20-year period following the establishment of two Raidió Éireann orchestras in 1948, including key works by composers including Brian Boydell, Seán Ó Riada, John Larchet, Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair, Thomas C Kelly, Noel Kelehan, Gerard Victory and AJ Potter.

[rte.ie/lyricfm](http://rte.ie/lyricfm)

#### Cinemas worldwide

##### Opera Australia's *Turandot*, September 15

Opera Australia's Handa Opera takes place on Sydney's spectacular outdoor water stage. Tonight's performance from earlier in the year and now screened in cinemas across the world is Puccini's *Turandot* from director Chen Shi-Zheng, who also directed Damon Albarn's opera, *Monkey: Journey to the West*. As to be expected, it has a wow-factor set from designer Dan Potra, complete with a 60-metre fire-breathing dragon and a shimmering pagoda that stands at an impressive height of 18 metres. The cast itself, conducted by Brian Castles-Onion, includes Dragana Radakovic as Turandot and Riccardo Massi as Calaf.

[turandotonsydneyharbour.com](http://turandotonsydneyharbour.com)

#### Saint-Omer Cathedral & Arte TV

##### Equilbey conducts Mozart choral works, September 16

Having spent the spring touring with the opera *Lucio Silla* (which was reviewed in these pages last month and remains available to view on the Philharmonie de Paris's website), the Insula orchestra and Accentus choir under Laurence Equilbey stick with Mozart for this September concert to be streamed live on Arte TV. They'll be performing his *Solemn Vespers* and *Coronation Mass* with soprano Sandrine Piau, alto Renata Pokupic, tenor Benjamin Bruns and bass Andreas Wolf.

[insulaorchestra.fr](http://insulaorchestra.fr); [arte.tv](http://arte.tv)

#### Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra & Mezzo TV

##### Daniele Gatti's inaugural concert as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra's Chief Conductor, September 9

The RCO's Opening Night feels special as it is, being black tie, but this year's is additionally so for also being Daniele Gatti's investiture as the orchestra's seventh Chief Conductor. Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture opens the programme, which also features Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (with Christian Gerhaher) and Respighi's evocative *Fountains of Rome*.

[concertgebouwrest.nl/en/concert/rco-opening-night](http://concertgebouwrest.nl/en/concert/rco-opening-night); [mezzo.tv](http://mezzo.tv)

#### Philharmonie, Berlin & Digital Concert Hall

##### John Adams conducts John Adams, September 17

John Adams is the Berlin Philharmonic's Composer in Residence this season, and this concert, in co-operation with the Berliner Festspiele/Musikfest Berlin, marks his conducting debut with the orchestra. The programme he has chosen follows his *Harmonielehre* with the German premiere of his violin concerto *Scheherazade.2*, which he says he composed 'into the bow' of Leila Josefowicz, who appears as his soloist.

[berliner-philharmoniker.com](http://berliner-philharmoniker.com); [digitalconcerthall.com](http://digitalconcerthall.com)

#### Royal Opera House & cinemas worldwide

##### Pappano conducts Bellini's *Norma*, September 26

Enjoy this new production of Bellini's operatic masterpiece, directed by Àlex Ollé and starring Joseph Calleja as Pollione and Sonya Yoncheva (replacing the originally billed Anna Netrebko) as the eponymous heroine. If you can't get to the Royal Opera House, you can instead catch the performance, live, at a cinema near you as part of the ROH's live cinema season 2016/17. As always, the screening will be hosted by a well-known figure from the ROH and include interviews and behind-the-scenes footage.

[roh.org.uk](http://roh.org.uk); [roh.org.uk/cinemas](http://roh.org.uk/cinemas)

### ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

#### Iain Bell's new opera takes David Jones's epic poem *In Parenthesis* as its source – with memorable results

##### Bell

Commissioned to mark both the 70th anniversary of Welsh National Opera and the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, *In Parenthesis* is a strong contribution to a century-long and troubled line of war operas stretching from *Wozzeck* through *Die Soldaten* and *Owen Wingrave* to *The Silver Tassie*.

In his autobiographically recollected poetical text, David Jones divided his London-Welsh origins between a cynical Everyman (Dai Overcoat, which becomes a gift of a role for Donald Maxwell) and his rhapsodic fellow squaddie, John Ball. Andrew Bidlack puts his grateful, *bel canto* tenor to tireless use, as the action moves from his commission in Southampton to carnage in the woods of Northern France. English subtitles – often superfluous, thanks to some close miking and excellent diction, even from the many



smaller parts – are provided in an unmissable bright yellow.

The libretto by David Antrobus and Emma Jenkins blends Welsh and English, hymn and ballad, though much of Iain Bell's score proceeds at a rat-a-tat recitative which cannot do full justice to a multi-layered meditation on memory. Put Jones's original text to one side, however, and a gripping piece of music theatre emerges. David Pountney's direction and Robert

Innes Hopkins's design respect the setting, and focus on clarity, as any first production should; there are enough ideas and relationships in the piece for a second staging to be quite different and even more effective, especially in the 're-greening' apotheosis amid the fields of blood.

Precedents can be found in Britten for the dual commentators (Alexandra Deshorties and Peter Coleman-Wright), who

achieve the titular parenthetical time-shifts between the clamorous 'now' of 1916 and a scarcely less unsettling myth-time steeped in Welsh animism; for the percussion-spangled orchestration, masterfully handled by Carlo Rizzi; and for the important choral roles, which bring out the best in Bell's writing. But *In Parenthesis* stands on its own feet. **Peter Quantrill**

Available to view for free until December 31, 2016, at [theoperaplayer.eu](http://theoperaplayer.eu)



WEDNESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> –  
SUNDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

SNAPE - BLYTHBURGH - SOUTHWOLD - ORFORD

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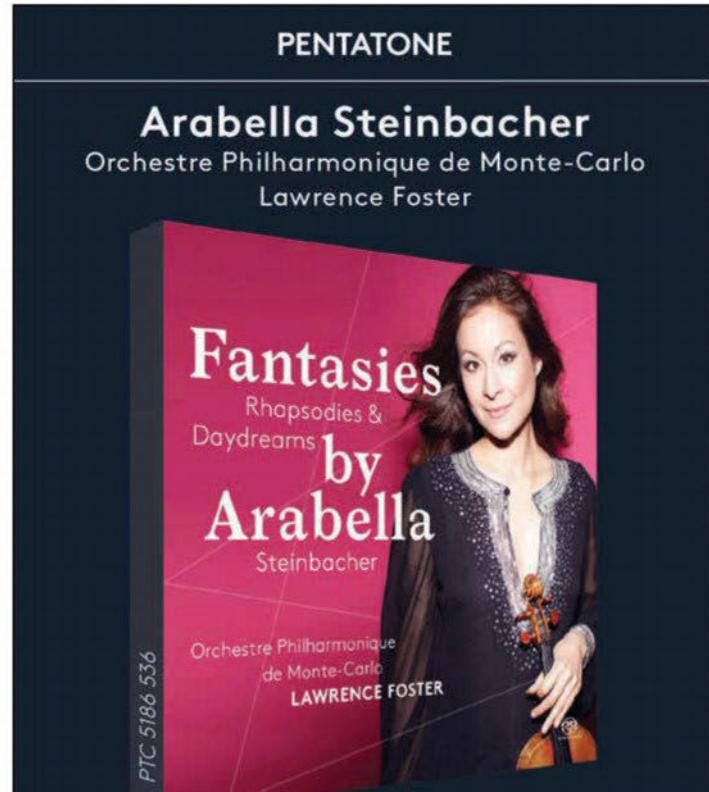
BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED BY JOHN GIBBONS  
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Alwyn will be represented by orchestral and chamber works which highlight the wide diversity of his craft. Alongside these works will be music from the standard repertoire and several new commissions from 20th century British composers. Also, given that Alwyn was a highly respected film composer of some two hundred scores there will be a screening of one of his classic films.

For further details please contact Festival Director, Elis Pehkonen.

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E-mail: elis.pehkonen@mymailbox.co.uk  
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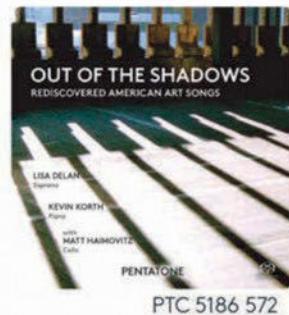
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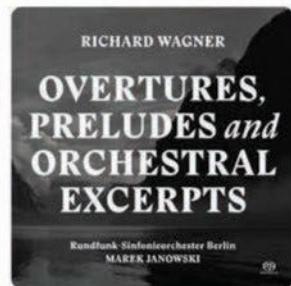
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**Andrew Everard**  
Audio Editor

## SEPTEMBER TEST DISCS



A glorious sound combines with striking performances to create a near-perfect listening experience in Phantasm's set of music by Dowland.



Available in 192kHz/24bit, Sir Simon Rattle's Beethoven cycle with the Berlin Philharmonic is blessed throughout with exceptional sound quality.

## Strong signs of a hi-fi revival

For those who had conventional audio components consigned to history, there's much in the latest arrivals to refute that argument



Look at the sales figures for audio components, and while some things seem to be going according to trend – in that CD player sales are declining and interest in turntables keeps growing – there are some surprises for those who had the traditional separates arena heading for oblivion. Tuner sales are up, although admittedly buoyed by the inclusion of network-streaming features, but good old stereo amplifiers are again showing growth, and the latest launches from some big hi-fi names show that this is a trend they're backing. For example, among the new products launched by Denon and Marantz parent company D+M Group, there are new stereo components at each end of the price-range, AV receivers designed to make the most of music played in high-resolution stereo, and a revamp of the HEOS multiroom offering to add hi-res capability; there are also plans to extend the wireless audio functionality across the two companies' catalogues.

In what always used to be seen as the 'new listeners start here' sector, Marantz has upgraded its highly popular entry-level offering with the launch of the CD6006 CD player and PM6006 amplifier, selling for £399 apiece (1). Compare them side by side with the CD/PM6005 they replace and there's not much to see beyond an additional digital input on the amplifier, but the Marantz engineers have taken the opportunity to retune the audio circuitry

for greater performance, including a redesign of the layout of both products, and have shielded the amplifier's digital section to avoid any interference with the rest of the signal path.

There's more on the Marantz range, in the form of its DSD-upsampling flagship SACD/CD player (2), in this month's Audio Essay, but the news from the HEOS division of D+M is that what has until now been a standalone brand is now being expanded into a feature, too: HEOS wireless multiroom functionality is being added to products in both the Denon and Marantz ranges. Already there are upmarket AV receivers with HEOS coming from both brands, and the functionality has been extended in the new HS2 HEOS wireless speakers to allow the playback of WAV, ALAC and FLAC files at up to 192kHz/24bit, with future plans to bring DSD and AIFF formats onboard. All the new models also have Bluetooth built in, as well as improvements to their wireless, internal clock and memory specifications for better response and data throughput.

Audiolab is boosting its appeal to the computer audio market with the arrival of the £800 M-ONE amplifier (3), which packs into a half-width case a digital-to-analogue converter able to handle files up to 384kHz/32bit and DSD256, Bluetooth wireless connectivity and 40W per channel stereo amplification. The latest in a growing range of digital-



capable mini-amplifiers, the M-ONE draws on the technology of the company's M-DAC and has a second USB socket for the connection of portable devices, as well as a headphone amplifier built in.

British company Roksan is aiming high with its new Blak series (4), said to offer 'superlative performance and features within a "statement product" aesthetic, but without the esoteric high-end audio price tag'. The range launches with two models, a £2500 CD player and a £2750 amplifier, which are being handbuilt in the UK and Germany. The amplifier delivers 150W per channel, has Bluetooth and a 192kHz/24bit and DSD128 DAC built in, and also features a dedicated headphone amplifier with its own power supply – when you select it, it shuts down the speaker output stages for optimal sound. Both player and amplifier offer the choice of standard RCA or XLR balanced connections and are available in Anthracite, Charcoal or Opium.

Finally, another addition to the rapidly expanding Astell&Kern range of personal digital players: the £500 AK70 (5) slots in above the entry-level AK Jr and offers 192kHz/24bit digital-to-analogue conversion with file support up to DSD, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity, and balanced and standard audio outputs. It can also be used as a USB DAC with a computer and comes in casework machined from solid aluminium. (6)

## ● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

# Denon DCD-2500NE/PMA-2500NE

SACD/CD player and amplifier mark a 'New Era' for Denon but show plenty of signs of the company's traditional strengths and values

Strange, isn't it, how perceptions can change over time? To many current buyers, the Denon brand is best known for its hi-tech AV receivers, while stablemate Marantz is most famous for its purist two-channel audio products, soon to be crowned with a new flagship duo, as explained in this month's Audio Essay, and bolstered with additions to both its mainstream range and its stylish MusicLink series. Except that's not quite the whole story, for just as Marantz also has its own range of AV products, so Denon also has a strong presence in the stereo arena, both through classic products like the PMA-250 amplifier and long-running TU-260L tuner, and through modern additions such as its Design Series CD player, amplifier and network receiver.

Its latest launch is a revised stereo range, extending from entry level up to reference models, the company having a strong reputation for high-end players and amps, not all of which have ever made it outside Japan. The duo we have here – the DCD-2500NE player at £1499 and the £1899 PMA-2500NE amplifier – is said to represent a 'New Era' for Denon, the model designation suffix showing that it picks up the baton from the previously launched 'Advanced Evolution' models.

Both models are unashamedly pitched at the premium sector of the market, and even before you start using them they step up to the mark with the kind of design and build you'd expect of products at this level. Each unit is solid and heavy, at 13.7kg for the player and 25kg for the amplifier. Of

### DENON DCD-2500NE

**Type** SACD/CD player

**Price** £1499

**Disc formats played** SACD, CD, files up to CD quality on CD-R/RW, and to DSD5.6 on DVD-R/RW media

**Outputs** Analogue, optical/coaxial digital (not for SACD)

**Other connections** Remote in/out

**Accessories supplied** Remote handset

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 43.4x13.8x33.5cm



### DENON PMA-2500NE

**Type** Stereo amplifier

**Price** £1899

**Power output** 80W per channel into 8 ohms, 2x160W into 4 ohms

**Analogue inputs** Moving coil/moving magnet phono, four line-in, power amp direct input

**Digital inputs** Two optical/two coaxial digital, asynchronous USB Type B

**Outputs** Record out, two sets of speaker terminals

**Other connections** Remote in/out

**Digital formats handled** PCM to 192kHz/24bit (all inputs), to 384kHz/32bit and DSD128/11.2MHz via USB

**Tone controls** Yes, with bypass

**Accessories supplied** Remote handset

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 43.4x18.2x43.1cm

[denon.co.uk](http://denon.co.uk)

the two, the player is the simpler product, seemingly offering no more than two-channel playback of both CDs and SACDs, and having a pair of analogue outputs, plus (from CD only) a choice of optical and coaxial digital output. But that's not all it offers: thanks to a newly developed transport mechanism, it can also play PCM audio files at up to 192kHz/24bit, as well as DSD2.8 and 5.6, stored on DVD-R/RW discs. So if you want to make your own ultra-high-resolution compilation discs, using a computer with a DVD burner, you can.

At the heart of the player's digital section are the highly regarded PCM1795 converters from TI, used in differential configuration for each channel and fed via the latest version of Denon's long-running AL32 processing. Now designated Advanced AL32 Processing Plus, this tried, tested and continuously developed technology is designed to interpolate data lost in the recording process to give a smoother, more organic sound. Meanwhile, a master-clock system with twin oscillators – one each for 44.1kHz and 48kHz and their multiples –

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## SUGGESTED PARTNERS

If you're keen to make the most of the Denon duo, why not try these useful system additions?

### CHORD COMPANY SHAWLINE

A high-quality interconnect will allow the Denon player to show what it can do: the Chord Company Shawline would be an excellent choice for a player and amp at this level.



### BOWERS & WILKINS CM8 S2

Given the power and detail on offer from this pairing, a substantial pair of speakers such as the excellent Bowers & Wilkins CM8 S2 would make a fine match.



is used to suppress jitter, and close attention is paid to the power supply for this clock section to the same end.

The new transport is mounted on a hefty base with a low centre of gravity to keep vibration to a minimum, and separate power supplies – right back to the transformers – are used for the analogue and digital sections. To optimise the sound, the player's Pure Direct mode turns off the display and digital outputs to minimise interference.

The amplifier, meanwhile, is both a real powerhouse – it delivers 80W per channel into 8 ohms, doubling that into 4 ohms – and very much up to date with the latest audio formats, thanks to a built-in digital-to-analogue section able to handle PCM formats up to 384kHz/32bit and DSD64/2.8MHz, 128/5.6MHz and even 256/11.2MHz. That ultra-high-resolution capability is realised when the amplifier is fed from a computer using its asynchronous USB input, but it also has conventional digital inputs: two optical and two coaxial. Like the player, the PMA-2500NE uses the PCM1795 conversion from TI and again the Advanced AL32 Processing Plus technology. Four line analogue inputs are also available, plus a phono stage switchable between moving coil and moving magnet, and the amp also has a direct input for an external pre-amplifier, bypassing the input volume control: that will be handy if the Denon is going to be used with an AV processor or receiver with front-channel left/right pre-amp outputs.

The internal design of the amplifier comprises six distinct blocks – phono and input, volume control, digital, amplification, power supply and control – to avoid interference, while twin transformers are used, mounted in opposition so any flux leakage is cancelled out. A comprehensive remote handset is supplied with both units and can drive the two as a system.

## PERFORMANCE

Operation of both player and amp are pretty much as usual, albeit with no small delight in the weighting and precision of the controls. The amp has input and volume controls, with a little display

between them to show what the DAC is receiving, and there are tone controls with a 'source direct' bypass – but there's also an 'analogue mode' to shut down the digital section when it's not required. And, as one might hope given the size of the two units and their undeniable equipment-rack presence, the sound is similarly big, rich and substantial, but with excellent detail rendition. Function, it seems, follows form in this case.

The amplifier, in particular, proves capable of delivering a huge dynamic slam when required but at the same time has all the finesse to deliver the smallest detail in a recording. That makes it as well suited to the drama and power of Terje Winge's 'Organism' set in DSD256 on the 2L label – where the weight and sheer air-moving ability of the organ is wonderfully realised – as it is to the intricate detail of Phantasm's new disc of Dowland, beautifully recorded by Linn.

**Yes, the sound is big and warm, but this is achieved at no cost to the sense of space and ambience in the presentation**

What's immediately clear is that, for all the dynamic power on tap here, the Denon duo majors on instrumental textures and timbres, creating an entirely captivating sound stage before the listener. Yes, the sound is big and warm, but this is achieved at no cost to the sense of space and ambience in the presentation, enabling the player and amplifier to deliver a room-filling sound with superb 'listen in' appeal.

In case there were any worries that the AL32 processing would deliver an over-smooth balance, those are soon allayed by the crispness and clarity of the presentation. And while the sound is extremely attractive with both CDs and – particularly – SACDs played on the DCD-2500NE, things get even more striking when making use of the PMA-2500NE's USB input to play higher-resolution files, from 192kHz-24bit PCM to DSD256s, or DVD-R/RW discs in the same formats via the player. With these, the effortless dynamics and clarity of the Denon are used

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Marantz offers the remarkable Special Edition versions of its SA-14S1 SACD/CD player and PM-14 S1 amplifier at £1800 apiece. The configuration is somewhat different, as here it's the player handling the computer audio connection and those hi-res files, while the amplifier is purely analogue. Visit [marantz.co.uk](http://marantz.co.uk) for more information.



### Arcam CDS27 player and A29 amplifier

Another alternative take, and this time at a more

affordable price, sees the Arcam CDS27 player (£595) partnered with the company's £995 A29 amplifier. Again the configuration places all the digital electronics in the player but this time you gain network streaming capability without the need for a computer in the system. Visit [arcam.co.uk](http://arcam.co.uk) for more information.



### Rotel 200Wpc RA-1592

Finally, if you fancy even more power than the Denon amp can muster, plus the built-in digital/computer audio capability, the 200Wpc Rotel RA-1592, due for review in a forthcoming issue, offers all this, plus Bluetooth connectivity, for £1895. Visit [rotel.com](http://rotel.com) for more information.



to good effect, giving even greater musical involvement without a hint of the sound becoming artificial or 'mechanical'.

This is real high-end audio made user-friendly and stylish. Partnered with a suitably accomplished pair of loudspeakers, this pairing has massive appeal. **G**

## ● REVIEW ARCAM MUSICBOOST

# Stepping up both sound and battery life

Can a slip-on case really turn a phone from a multifunction device into an optimised music player? One British company thinks so

**R**ecent years have seen Cambridgeshire-based Arcam reinventing itself. From being a company best known for making reliable if slightly safe-sounding mainstream stereo components in its own factory, it is now much more of a design and engineering operation, its products assembled either in China or – in the case of its high-end models – in the American facility of its Canadian-based parent company. It has also expanded its line-up significantly, complementing its amplifier and receivers with a range of black boxes offering digital-to-analogue conversion and even Bluetooth connectivity for computers, tablets and smartphones.

At the same time as Arcam has been launching these computer audio devices, the portable music landscape has been changing: after the move away from what used to be called 'MP3 players' and devices such as the Apple iPod, increasing numbers of users have been using their phone as a music player. Lately, however, there's been something of a return to dedicated digital music players among enthusiasts, with the rise of brands such as Astell&Kern and FiiO, and the arrival into the market of brands such as Pioneer, whose hi-res XDP-100R player featured in these pages last month. Meanwhile there's also been the arrival of portable digital-to-analogue converters such as the Chord Mojo, small enough to be carried around and used to boost the sound of phones and tablets, even if these can be a bit cumbersome by the time you've added the correct cables and/or adaptors to use them.

Arcam has an unusual solution to this slightly clunky 'portable DAC' idea, with the added bonus of increasing the battery life of the phone with which it's used – or, more to the point, the iPhone with which it's used; the Arcam MusicBOOST is tailored for use with the Apple iPhone 6 and 6s models. Selling for £120 – although a little shopping around will find it for rather less, albeit in an older version best suited to the older iPhone 6 – it comes in the form of a rubberised sleeve, not much larger than the phone itself, and supplied with a USB charging/synchronisation cable.

It compensates for the added bulk it adds – about 1.5cm in length and 0.5cm

### ARCAM MUSICBOOST

**Type** iPhone battery/DAC/headphone amplifier

**Price** £120

**Fits** Apple iPhone 6/6s (earlier model, available at a discount, only fits iPhone 6)

**Connections** microUSB for charging/sync, 3.5mm stereo headphone socket, Apple Lightning

**Dimensions** (HxWxD, approx)

15.3x7x1.5cm

[arcam.co.uk](http://arcam.co.uk)



of depth, plus a weight of around 100g – with an extra onboard battery, both to power itself and recharge the phone, plus a built-in DAC and headphone amplifier, designed to deliver sufficient 'oomph' to drive even difficult headphone loads. The DAC and headphone amplifier here are both from digital specialist TI/Burr Brown, which supplies the converters used in many CD players and amplifiers, and the MusicBOOST connects using the standard 'Lightning' connector, which engages when you slide the iPhone into the (snug) holder embedded in the rubberised casework.

Using the combination is simple: the supplied cable plugs into the MusicBOOST's microUSB socket and your computer (or a standard power adaptor plug if you're not transferring music), and a 'Boost' button starts charging. Four white LEDs are provided to check the state of charge at the touch of the Arcam's other button, and a standard 3.5mm socket feeds sound out to your headphones.

### PERFORMANCE

My initial response was that the Arcam made my iPhone 6S a bit bulky, but having used it on a variety of occasions when I would normally have found myself looking for a recharge before the end of the day – for business reasons my phone usually runs with several 'push' services running continually, for email and the like – I found the added bulk was more than acceptable given the extended usage time it delivered. And the sound, especially when using the iPhone to run Onkyo's HF Player with the inexpensive HD Player Pack add-on to allow hi-res music to be played,

is remarkably gutsy and well detailed when used with the Arcam's headphone output.

I tried music both with and without the Arcam, and with a variety of phones from Focal's Sphears and my usual travelling Phonak Audeo in-ears – old, but rejuvenated with a set of Snugs custom in-ear moulds – all the way through to Oppo's PM-3 and Bang & Olufsen's H6 on-ears, and in each case the Arcam added a level of authority and ease that the phone alone was unable to muster. In fact, where the iPhone seemed to be struggling a bit, notably with the Oppos and the same company's even more demanding PM-1 flagship model, the Arcam gave that reassuring sense of working well within its limits, and as a result allowing one to concentrate on the music, and not how it was being played.

**The Arcam gave a reassuring sense of working well within its limits, allowing one to concentrate on the music**

That made for a crisp, involving rendition of simple solo music such as Mari Kodama's complete set of Beethoven Piano Sonatas on Pentatone, with the piano beautifully weighted and no shortage of air in the sound. It also proved itself highly persuasive with the Gergiev/LSO recording of Strauss's *Elektra* on the orchestra's own label, the Arcam amp showing its improved 'grip' on the headphones from the opening chords of this highly dynamic recording.

Yes, the MusicBOOST does add to the bulk and weight of the iPhone, but if you're planning on listening on long journeys, its benefits make it well worth the money. **G**

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## ESSAY

# Super Audio – just without the CD part

The rise of DSD as a high-resolution 'computer audio' format seems unstoppable, with ever more devices appearing that can play it

**A**mong most of the music-buying public, the Super Audio CD, or SACD, is a footnote in history.

Tried as a replacement for the ubiquitous compact disc, it was admittedly more popular than the rival DVD-Audio format, which just about vanished without trace, but hardly made a dent on the consciousness of the mass market.

I'm not decrying the format in any way whatsoever. Like other enthusiasts, I like what SACD can do, in both stereo and multichannel formats, have a good collection of discs and at least one machine able to play them. Actually, if you count my elderly PS3 and my 'universal' Blu-ray player beside my dedicated SACD player, make that three devices in my system able to play both CDs and their 'super' variant. So I have quite a lot invested in SACD, and continue to enjoy the discs I have.

According to the enthusiast

**SA-CD.net** website, there have been

more than 10,000 titles released, with still more being added by a number of labels. Admittedly **SA-CD.net** has become **HRaudio.net**, reflecting its wider remit of now also covering hi-res audio on Blu-ray and other formats, but the fact remains that SACD still has a place in the market – and the enabling audio format behind the discs, DSD, is taking on a new lease of life in the 'computer music' era.

The rise of DSD audio is a subject on which I have touched before but I make no apology for doing so again, simply because there is now so much equipment coming to market able to play not just the SACD-quality DSD64 format, using 2.8MHz sampling of one-bit data (as opposed to the multi-bit/lower sampling rate PCM formats), but also DSD128/5.6MHz and DSD256/11.2MHz. There are even some recordings being made using higher DSD variants still, but to date there is no domestic equipment – as far as I am aware – able to play them.

These days, it seems that just about every piece of digital equipment I receive information about, and every sample I'm sent for review – from pocket music players



Marantz is firmly committed to DSD: the forthcoming SA-10

to digital-to-analogue converters and even players and amplifiers – is capable of DSD5.6 playback, and there are a number of music download sites either specialising in DSD or including it as part of their offering, so clearly something is going on.

**Beyond the disc world, there's a growing interest in DSD, not least due to the opportunities it offers designers to build equipment to turn the single-bit format into an audio output**

But although it may seem like DSD is making a comeback, the truth is that in some markets it never went away. In several Asian countries, and especially in Japan, what is now called 'physical media' – as opposed to files downloaded online – has maintained much of its status with music buyers, and the visitor will be surprised to find not only busy shops selling CDs and the like but also the survival of some of those retail brands now all but vanished elsewhere. For example, Tower Records, having separated from the parent brand

getting on for 15 years ago, is still going strong, as witness its massive store in Shibuya – one of the largest record stores in the world.

But beyond the world of discs, there's definitely growing interest in DSD, not least due to the opportunities it offers for audio designers to build equipment with extremely simple converters to turn the single-bit format into an audio output. Way back when SACD was first being introduced, I remember a Sony engineer explaining to me how compact, energy-efficient portable players could be made, because effectively all that was needed was a low-pass filter between the output from the disc and the audio connections – and now it seems that the possibility is finding new fans.

Revealed at the High End show in Munich this year and later demonstrated at the D+M

Group's European Dealer Conference in June, the new SA-10 SACD/CD player/DAC is set to become the flagship Marantz digital device when it finally hits the shops at the beginning of next year, priced at around £5499. And it's based around the company's Marantz Musical Mastering technology, here meaning that all incoming digital information will be upsampled to DSD256/11.2MHz (although the disc-player section can also play files up to this level stored on DVD-R/RW discs).

From there, whether upsampled or already in DSD11.2MHz format, the audio stream needs merely to be passed through a simplified processor – in this case one derived from the Bitstream technology developed by former Marantz parent company Philips back in the early days of CD – before it is output from the player to an amplifier. Working on the new player has been Rainer Finck, who was part of the Bitstream team at Philips, in close co-operation with Marantz Brand Ambassador (and long-time SACD/DSD advocate) Ken Ishiwata, who puts the case for the design in these terms: simply, he says, 'DSD is analogue'. 

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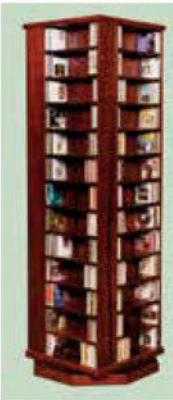


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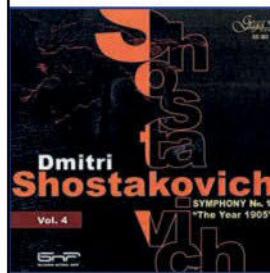
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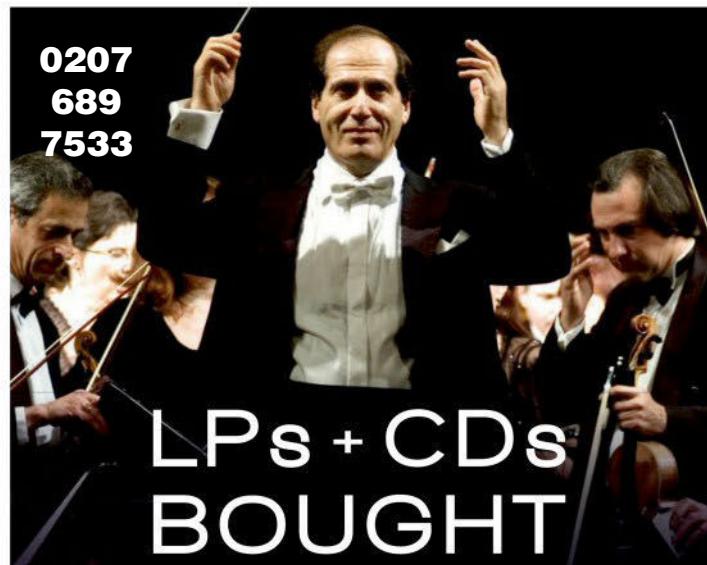


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## Phantom Menuhin

Way back in 1993 I purchased a CD that included Brahms's Double Concerto from an outlet called Covent Garden Records in which the soloists were Yehudi Menuhin and Paul Tortelier. It was unique in so far as the remainder of the disc also included the Double Concerto of Delius. The orchestras were also different as the major work was played by the London Philharmonic under Paavo Berglund, while it was the Royal Philharmonic under the baton of Meredith Davies for the Delius. These performances were recorded far apart in 1985 and 1977 respectively. At the present time there is no recording of the Delius on the market.

My main reason for writing this letter is that neither in 1993 and not since my purchase have I ever managed to discover a single mention of this unusual issue, nor seen another copy, and I'm curious to discover whether this recording has reappeared again in the UK in the meantime. Looking through the various recent surveys of all the Menuhin recordings there has been absolutely no mention of this 'phantom' issue.

*John Tebbit  
Slough, Berkshire*

*The EMI disc (CDM7 63022-2) featuring this unusual pairing of works is no longer available, but the same recordings can be found on the 'Paul Tortelier: The Great EMI Recordings' box-set (688627-2, 5/10) – Ed.*

## Seeing is believing

In the July issue I noted that conductor Andris Nelsons will be recording more Shostakovich symphonies. I do hope that these will be recorded on video. In the past I have bought many LPs, then CDs, then SACDs, and now I buy only concert videos. It appears that the recording of concerts on video is diminishing – to wit, only two new releases were in this issue. I encourage recording companies to release more concerts on DVD and Blu-ray!

*Wendell Driggers  
Reston, VA, USA*

## Gerontius reappears

In last year's June edition you published a letter from Mr Hoffman in the USA

## Letter of the Month

### In praise of the spirituality of Harnoncourt

For the past 71 years I have been watching, and listening to, great music in live performances, on the radio and in recordings. During that time I have heard, I think, all the acknowledged masters conduct Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*. There are tremendous recordings conducted by Toscanini, Klemperer, Giulini and many others, but none, that I can remember, have the spirituality of this new recording by Harnoncourt (July, page 94). He almost makes one feel that his performance is part of a complete order of the Latin Mass, being sung in the appropriate spaces of the liturgy.

Whilst I have been much moved in the past by the music I cannot recall being so involved.

*Gerald Funnell  
Hastings, Kent*



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**PRESTO  
CLASSICAL**

who was intrigued by a YouTube video he had seen of Sir Adrian Boult's 1968 BBC television production of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in Canterbury Cathedral. In the following month's issue there was an equally intriguing letter from John Patrick, Head of Audio at ICA Classics. This led me to believe that my five-year project to achieve a reshowing of this performance on the BBC, or better still an issue on DVD using their original master, was now moving towards reality.

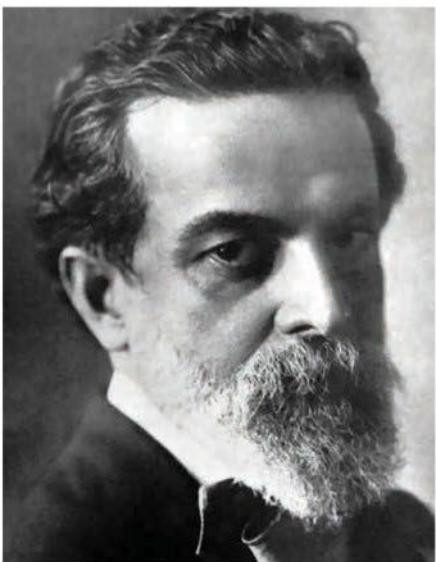
Matters have indeed moved from strength to strength. It has been my privilege to work with ICA towards that end through an opportunity to directly support the project. Another step came at the end of June this year with a 'mini launch' showing clips from the Canterbury performance, which at that time was filmed using eight of only nine colour TV cameras available in the UK. This mini showing, featured on the

*Gramophone* website, was given at a preconcert presentation on June 26 by Christopher Morley of the *Birmingham Post* and Barry Wordsworth – one-time student of Sir Adrian – before the final concert in the Adrian Boult Hall at the Birmingham Conservatoire, prior to its imminent demolition.

The UK release date has now been scheduled by ICA Classics for October 2016 for this historic performance, with soloists Peter Pears, Janet Baker, John Shirley-Quirk and the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir. There will also be, in addition, a second DVD consisting of a one-hour profile of Sir Adrian first shown by the BBC on the April 8, 1989, to celebrate the centenary of his birth.

The ongoing interest shown by *Gramophone* in this project is very much appreciated.

*Peter Graham  
Solibull, West Midlands*



Alberto Nepomuceno: figurehead of Brazilian music

## Don't forget Nepomuceno...

Andrew Farach-Colton's illuminating feature in July (page 20) on Latin American classical music references Villa-Lobos and Ginastera as among the prime movers in the 'nationalistic styles'. Actually, the father of it all was the Brazilian Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920). He often lodged in his friend Edvard Grieg's house, absorbing the Norwegian's fervent nationalism, and was further musically influenced by his friends Saint-Saëns, d'Indy and Debussy. His idiomatic Third String Quartet of 1890 (the *Brazilian*) represented a fusion of folk elements with a Brahmsian salon style.

Villa-Lobos was one of his students, and, as illustrated by Farach-Colton, fused his love of contrapuntal Bach with the *choro* lament, resulting in a richly exotic indigenous tapestry. This idiom was subsequently broadened by Pixinguinha (1898-1973), who gave the *choro* an additional twist with the introduction of jazz instrumentation and improvisation, touring Europe in the 1920s with the Oito Batutas band. By this means full circle had been achieved in that he was now offering to Europe an ethnic style that had been nurtured as a result of the original permeation into South America of the European mode through the conduit of Nepomuceno. These innovators paved the way for the modern development of Latin American classical music.

Barry Borman  
Edgware, Middlesex

## ...or Paz and Gandini

As an Argentinian music lover, I was rather surprised by Andrew Farach-Colton's feature. Obviously Alberto Ginastera was a major composer in my country.

But of equal (and possibly even greater) importance were Juan Carlos Paz (1897-1972) and Gerardo Gandini (1936-2013) who are not mentioned.

The former was highly praised in his time by the most famous conductors who frequently visited Buenos Aires. Furthermore, he was of utmost importance in bringing our musical world much closer to the Second Viennese School (particularly Schoenberg) – 12-tone and serial music. Major works like *Dédalus*, *Continuidad* or *Seis superposiciones* have been, and still are, significant.

Gandini was Ginastera's most important pupil (he also studied with Goffredo Petrassi in Italy). He taught composition at Juilliard, was edited by Ricordi and composed many important works (five operas, music for orchestra, chamber music and numerous piano works including eight sonatas).

Having a deep knowledge and interest in the cultural production of various South American countries, I would also like to mention that 'Latin American music' simply does not exist. The countries south of the Rio Grande are so thoroughly different in every respect – culturally, historically, geographically and economically, as well as in terms of resources and climate – that to try to group them together is about the same as trying to describe European music by writing about Portugal and Finland or France and Greece in the same article.

Jorge Helft  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

## New World conundrum

Rob Cowan brings up a point of contention at the end of Dvořák's *New World Symphony* (Classics Reconsidered, June). In his book *Orchestral Variations*, Norman Del Mar cites a letter from Dvořák to the publisher Simrock in which he says that the passage in question should be played 'more broadly', with a return to the fast tempo 12 bars from the end. This instruction was printed in the Simrock score, but omitted from the later Artia/Supraphon (now Bärenreiter) edition. So perhaps the old edition – and tradition – was right after all?

Lance Friedel  
Warwick, RI, USA

## Editorial notes

Regarding your Musician and the Score feature with Mariiss Jansons in the August issue, in which he discusses Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2, his resulting recording is in fact a cut version and not the complete version as stated.

## NEXT MONTH AWARDS 2016



## Recording of the Year!

After several intense months in which our critics have listened to hundreds of recordings, the 2016 Awards reach their conclusion as we reveal which release has been crowned Recording of the Year

## Artist accolades

Also explored in our special Awards issue are this year's Artist of the Year (voted for by our readers), Young Artist of the Year and the 2016 Lifetime Achievement recipient

## Beethoven's Symphony No 3

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Murray Perahia performs Beethoven's Emperor Concerto

...and much more!

# OBITUARIES

A singer for the stars, a soprano who was a New York institution, and an award-winning organist

## MARNI NIXON

*Soprano*

*Born February 22, 1930*

*Died July 24, 2016*

If various iconic singers throughout recorded history have been nicknamed 'The Voice', Marni Nixon, who has died aged 86, might have been dubbed 'The Voice Without A Face'. 'Dubbed' being the operative word, as she was most famous for recording sung vocals for many of Hollywood's finest – among them (an annoyed) Natalie Wood in *West Side Story* and *Gypsy*, (a collaborative) Deborah Kerr in *The King and I* and (a disappointed) Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*; but, all told, more than 50 movies featured Nixon on their soundtracks.

Yet she was rarely seen on the big screen (a cameo in *The Sound Of Music* notwithstanding), leading *Time* magazine to coin an alternative name for her: 'The ghostess with the mostest'. With the soprano sworn to secrecy, it wasn't until the generous-spirited Kerr revealed Nixon's involvement that her role was known. At one Hollywood opening, with particular cruelty, the crowd screamed with delight when they mistook her for Julie Andrews, until someone was heard by Nixon to say, 'Oh, she's nobody'.

Yet that popular impression could not have been more wrong. Not only did her peculiar Hollywood calling require immense skill and empathy, Nixon – born Margaret Nixon McEathron – was a highly accomplished soprano in her own right. Her teachers had included Sarah Caldwell at Tanglewood, and she worked with, variously, Leopold Stokowski, Stravinsky and Leonard Bernstein (whom she impressed with her spunky performance and narration on one of his Young People's Concerts despite a failed teleprompter). She made many classical recordings, including works by Webern, Copland, Stravinsky, Ives and Schoenberg – and these reveal a voice that through clarity, diction and a sense of her warm personality front and centre, somehow bridges the gap between the discipline (sometimes constriction) of classical technique and the immediacy of musical theatre.

She became a star, with Broadway shows, TV series and long concert tours to her credit. And if it is still her personifications of Hepburn's Eliza and Wood's Maria that ring in our ears it would be a shame, lovely as that legacy



Marni Nixon: the 'hidden' voice of many a leading lady in numerous classic movie musicals

is, if no more was remembered. Because one only has to listen to her recording, say, of the 'Aria' from Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras* No 5 to hear what made her so very special. A poise, an absolute vocal security, and a beautiful spirit caught in the stave.

**James Inverne**

## MARALIN NISKA

*Soprano*

*Born November 16, 1926*

*Died July 9, 2016*



The American operatic soprano Maralin Niska has died aged 89.

Known for her powerful performances in New York, both at New York City Opera and the Met, she was admired for her rare courage and bold temperament on stage.

Niska did not initially train as a singer; she studied English at the University of California in Los Angeles, and then taught at high-school level before focusing on her singing career. She expanded her repertoire by performing with various opera companies before being hired by New York City Opera in 1967; she made her debut there as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Niska went on to appear as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* and Violetta in *La traviata*. In total, she sang 29 lead roles – more than any other member of the company.

In 1970, Niska caused a sensation in Janáček's *The Makropoulos Affair* when she

stripped to the waist. The *New York Times* hailed this performance as 'sensational', claiming that 'she lowered the temperature of the stage to near absolute zero'. She went on to sing at the Met, performing with Luciano Pavarotti and Plácido Domingo in a production of *La bohème* for the first ever 'Live from the Met' telecast, a rare documentation of her largely unrecorded performances. She retired to Santa Fe in 1981 and spent her final years teaching privately.

**Nathaniel Gore**

## ANDRÉ ISOIR

*Organist*

*Born July 20, 1935*

*Died July 20, 2016*



After studying at both the École César-Franck and the Paris Conservatoire, Isoir went on to win a host of awards, including, in 1965, the improvisation competition in St Albans. He held the posts of titulaire at St Médard in Paris (1952-67), St Severin (1967) and the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés (1973 until his death). From 1974 to 1983 he taught at the Conservatoire d'Orsay, and then at the Conservatoire National de Région de Boulogne-Billancourt until 1994.

He recorded extensively, mainly for Calliope, including a cycle of the complete Bach organ works – perhaps his finest achievement – and the organ works of César Franck. **James Jolly**

# NEW RELEASES INDEX

The latest releases on CD, SACD, DVD, Blu-ray and download

**Key:** Ⓛ Full price £10 and over Ⓜ Medium price £7.76 - £9.99 Ⓝ Budget price £6.25 - £7.75 Ⓞ Super-budget price up to £6.24 Ⓟ Reissue Ⓠ Historic Ⓡ SACD Ⓢ DVD Ⓣ Blu-ray Ⓤ LP

## CD & SACD

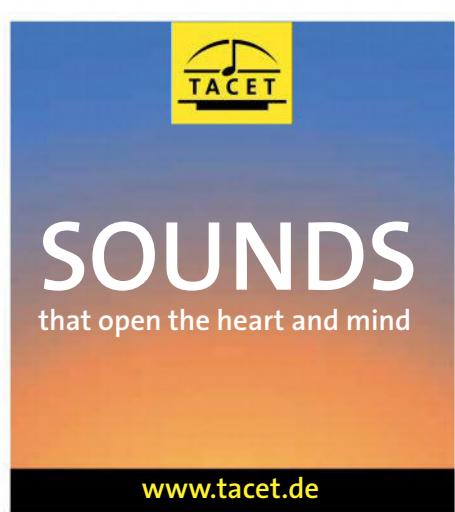
<b>AEOLUS</b>	<a href="http://aeolus-music.com">aeolus-music.com</a>
Various Cpsrs Hymnes. Latry/Robin/Mernier/Farago/Dubois.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓟ Ⓡ )	<b>AE1101</b>
<b>ALPHA</b>	<a href="http://outhere-music.com/alpha">outhere-music.com/alpha</a>
Haydn Syms Nos 4, 42 & 64. Giardino Armonico/Antonini.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>ALPHA672</b>
Mozart Stg Qts Nos 16 & 19. Van Kuijk Qt.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>ALPHA246</b>
Various Cpsrs Il était une fois.... Devos/Meng/Giardini Qt.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>ALPHA244</b>
<b>APARTE</b>	<a href="http://apartemusic.com">apartemusic.com</a>
Various Cpsrs Inspirations. Leleu.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>AP114</b>
<b>ARCANA</b>	<a href="http://outhere-music.com/en/labels/arcana">outhere-music.com/en/labels/arcana</a>
Corelli Vn Sons. Gatti/Nasillo/Morini.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>A397</b>
<b>ARS PRODUKTION</b>	<a href="http://ars-produktion.de">ars-produktion.de</a>
Pleyel Hidden Gems, Vol 3. IPG Pleyel Pf Trio.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>ARS38 203</b>
Various Cpsrs American Stories - Wks for Two Pf.	
Bergmann Duo.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>ARS38 188</b>
<b>ATOLL</b>	<a href="http://atollcd.com">atollcd.com</a>
Various Cpsrs Breathe: New Notes for Fl from Ireland & New Zealand. Dowdall.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>ACD111</b>
<b>AUDITE</b>	<a href="http://audite.de">audite.de</a>
Various Cpsrs Portrait (r1955-63). Foster.	Ⓜ Ⓝ
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>AUDITE21 437</b>
<b>BIS</b>	<a href="http://bis.se">bis.se</a>
Bach, CPE Solo Kybd Wks, Vol 31. Spányi.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BIS2131</b>
Dean Shadow Music. Swedish CO/Dean.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BIS2194</b>
Kuusisto, J Glow - Chbr Wks. Kuusisto/Meta4.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BIS2192</b>
Mozart Syms Nos 21, 27 & 34. Haydn Sinfonietta Wien/Huss.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BIS2218</b>
Palestrina. Victoria Roma aeterna - Masses. New York Polyphony.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BIS2203</b>
Sibelius Syms Nos 3, 6 & 7. Minnesota Orch/Vänskä.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BIS2006</b>
<b>BMOP SOUND</b>	<a href="http://bmop.org/audio-recordings">bmop.org/audio-recordings</a>
Agócs Debrecen Passion. Boston Modern Orch Project/Rose, G.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BMOP1046</b>
Stock, D Concs. Boston Modern Orch Project/Rose, G.	
( ⓘ Ⓡ )	<b>BMOP1047</b>
<b>BRILLIANT CLASSICS</b>	<a href="http://brilliantclassics.com">brilliantclassics.com</a>
Anonymous Per anni circulum - Gregorian Chant. Schola Gregoriana Benedetto XVI/Belinazzo.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>95286</b>
Gangi Studies for Gtr. Pace, A.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>95204</b>
Handel Cantatas. Sons. Recondita Armonia Ens.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>95362</b>
Hummel. Moscheles. Ries Vn Sons. Testori/Mastroprimiano.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>95023</b>
Meyerbeer In France. Thébault/Pruvot/Sofia PO/Talpain.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>94732</b>
Martucci Pf Wks. Miodini.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>94800</b>
Molter Orch Wks. Cantatas. Camerata Bachiensis/Kirchner.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>95273</b>
Valentini Cpte Mandolin Sons. Pizzicar Galante.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>95257</b>
Various Cpsrs Husum Organ Book. Tomadin.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>95328</b>
Various Cpsrs Russian Gtr, 1800-1850. Timofeyev/Schneiderman.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>95405</b>
<b>BR-KLASSIK</b>	<a href="http://br-online.de">br-online.de</a>
Various Cpsrs Rhapsody (pp2015). Matsuev/Bavarian RSO/Jansons.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>900146</b>

<b>BUDAPEST MUSIC CENTRE</b>	<a href="http://bmc.hu">bmc.hu</a>
Lajtha Cpte Wks for Stg Orch. Budapest CO/Fontanelli/	
Rohmann/Csaba.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>BMC189</b>
<b>CAPRICCIO</b>	<a href="http://capriccio.at">capriccio.at</a>
Brahms Stg Qnt No 2 Schoenberg Verklärte Nacht. Camerata Academica of the Salzburg Mozarteum/Végh.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>C8004</b>
Ginastera Orch Wks. DSO Berlin/Tamayo.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>C5271</b>
Glinka Pf Vars. Minh.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>C5285</b>
Purcell Op Stes. ASMF/Marriner.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>C8001</b>
Schmidt Orch Wks. German St PO, Rhineland Palatinate/Rumpf.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>C5274</b>
Schoenberg Pf Arrs. Barański/Jarnot/Liska/Grau/Schumacher/Roelcke.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>C5277</b>
<b>CARUS</b>	<a href="http://carus-verlag.com">carus-verlag.com</a>
Campra Messe de Requiem. Sols/ens3 vocal et instrumentale/Beuerle.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>CARUS83 391</b>
<b>CHANSONS</b>	<a href="http://chanados.net">chanados.net</a>
Atterberg Orch Wks, Vol 5. Gothenburg SO/Järvi, N.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CHSA5166</b>
Delius Orch Wks (r1994). Hickox.	
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Elgar Caractacus (r1992). Hickox.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CHAN241-58</b>
Holst Orch Wks (r1994). Hickox.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CHAN10911</b>
Ireland Orch Wks (r1994). Hickox.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CHAN10912</b>
<b>CHANNEL CLASSICS</b>	<a href="http://channelclassics.com">channelclassics.com</a>
Fischer, I Cpsr's Portrait. Fischer, N/Van Hasselt/Kobra Voc Ens.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>CCS34516</b>
Telemann Concs. Ihr Völker hört. Wilkinson/Florilegium/Solomon.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>CCS38616</b>
<b>CLAUDIO</b>	<a href="http://claudiorecords.com">claudiorecords.com</a>
Liszt Lélio Fantasy. Totentanz. Telizyn/Kiev SO/Blazhkov.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>CR4012-2; ( ⓘ Ⓜ )</b> <b>CR4012-6</b>
<b>CLAVES</b>	<a href="http://claves.ch">claves.ch</a>
Beethoven Bagatelles Chopin Preludes. Budu.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>50-1602</b>
<b>COVIELLO</b>	<a href="http://covielloclassics.de">covielloclassics.de</a>
Various Cpsrs Sweet Melancholy - Wks for Viol Consort.	
Cellini Consort.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>COV91604</b>
<b>CPO</b>	<a href="http://jpc.de/jpcng/cpo/home">jpc.de/jpcng/cpo/home</a>
Brahms Stg Qt No 1 Herzogenberg Three Stg Qts, Op 42.	
Minguez Qt.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CP0777 084-2</b>
Bruckner Cpte Syms. Venzago.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CPO555 023-2</b>
Farina Consort Wks. Accademia del Ricercare/Busca.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>CPO555 034-2</b>
Fibich Bride of Messina. Sols/Magdeburg PO/Ishii.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CPO777 981-2</b>
Gernsheim Syms Nos 2 & 4. Mainz Philh St Orch/Bäumer.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CPO777 848-2</b>
Reger Solo Vn Sons, Op 42. Wallin.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CPO777 762-2</b>
Telemann Trios pour le dessus de viole. Hamburger Ratsmusik/Eckert.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>CPO777 968-2</b>
<b>CRYSTAL RECORDS</b>	<a href="http://crystalrecords.com">crystalrecords.com</a>
Various Cpsrs Wks for Sax Ens. Tse/Mi-Bémol Sax Ens.	
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<b>DACAPO</b>	<a href="http://dacapo-records.dk">dacapo-records.dk</a>
Helsted Decet. Stg Qt. Danish Sinfonietta/Riddell.	
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Various Cpsrs French Wks for Vc & Pf. Thomsen/Stærk.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>8 224727</b>
<b>DB PRODUCTIONS</b>	<a href="http://db-productions.se">db-productions.se</a>
Vetrov Solo Wks for Russian Gtr. Falk.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DBCD169</b>
<b>DELOS</b>	<a href="http://delosmusic.com">delosmusic.com</a>
Soler Concs for Two Kybds. LeRoy/Vinikour.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DE3491</b>
Various Cpsrs Creation - Chbr Wks. Poulenc Trio.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DE3516</b>
Various Cpsrs Crescendo - Op Arias. Secco/Kaunas City SO/Orbelian.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DE3482</b>
Various Cpsrs Sonata-Song - Wks for Solo Va. Milišavljević.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DE3519</b>
Various Cpsrs War, Peace, Love & Sorrow. Hvorostovsky.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DE3517</b>
<b>DELPHIAN</b>	<a href="http://delphianrecords.co.uk">delphianrecords.co.uk</a>
Gesualdo Sacrae cantiones. Marian Consort/McCleery.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DCD34176</b>
Schubert Wanderer - Songs. Williams, R/Burnside.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DCD34170</b>
Stravinsky Chor Wks. Ch of St Mary's Cath, Edinburgh/Ferguson.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DCD34164</b>
<b>DG/DISCOVERY</b>	
Various Cpsrs Forgotten Ferras (r1948-71). Ferras.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>482 5037</b>
<b>DISQUES DOM FORLANE</b>	<a href="http://disquesdom.com">disquesdom.com</a>
Various Cpsrs French Art of Singing (r1913-58). Various artists.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>FOR17014</b>
<b>DIVINE ART</b>	<a href="http://divine-art.co.uk">divine-art.co.uk</a>
Henderson From the Old World to the New World. Green & Pleasant Band.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DDA25141</b>
<b>DUX</b>	<a href="http://dux.pl">dux.pl</a>
Łukaszewski Musica profana, Vol 1. Mikołajczyk-Niewiedzial/Guz-Seroka.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DUX1276</b>
Various Cpsrs Real Life Song. Freszel.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>DUX1239</b>
<b>DYNAMIC</b>	<a href="http://dynamic.it">dynamic.it</a>
Various Cpsrs Concerti romani. I Musici.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>CD57752</b>
<b>eONE</b>	<a href="http://eoneclassical.com">eoneclassical.com</a>
Messiaen Des canyons aux étoiles. Santa Fe Chbr Music Fest/Gilbert.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>EOMCD7795</b>
<b>ERMITAGE CLASSICAL</b>	
Ravel Orch Wks (r1958). New York PO/Bernstein.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ Ⓡ )	<b>LPVNL12770</b>
<b>ETCETERA</b>	<a href="http://etcetera-records.com">etcetera-records.com</a>
Flocco Lamentations. Mertens/Kuijken, W/Van der Meer/Verhelst/Van Heyghen.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>KTC1544</b>
Morales Seven Lamentations. Utopia.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>KTC1538</b>
Rameau Pièces de clavecin en concerts. Bernolet/Apotheosis.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>KTC1523</b>
Various Cpsrs Pf Wks. Egorov.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>KTC1520</b>
<b>EVIDENCE</b>	
Various Cpsrs Patchwork - Wks for Fl & Pf. Magalhães/Bijzak.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>EVCDO25</b>
<b>FRA BERNARDO</b>	<a href="http://frabernardo.com">frabernardo.com</a>
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( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>FB1603721</b>
<b>GRAMOLA</b>	<a href="http://gramola.at">gramola.at</a>
Beethoven Pf Trios, Vol 3. TrioVanBeethoven.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>99117</b>
Various Cpsrs Letzten Tage der Menschheit. Szanto/Wagner, K/Schuh.	
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Lourié Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 1. Koukl.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>GP737</b>
<b>HARMONIA MUNDI</b>	<a href="http://harmoniamundi.com">harmoniamundi.com</a>
Various Cpsrs Hawniyaz. Kalhor/Aynur/Gambarov/Qocgiri.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>HMC90 5277</b>
Various Cpsrs Overtones. Wu Wei/Wang Li.	
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Various Cpsrs Thrace: Sunday Morning Sessions. Queyras/Chemirani, B & K/Sinopoulos.	
( ⓘ Ⓜ )	<b>HMC90 2242</b>

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Bach, JS. Beethoven. Telemann Flute Serenade (r1972). <i>Galway/ London Virtuosi.</i>	Ⓜ ② <b>HTGCD296</b>	
Various Cpsrs Aspects of Nature: English & Scottish Rec Wks. <i>Turner/Lawson/Meynell/Dunn.</i>	Ⓕ <b>HTGCD201</b>	
<b>HUNGAROTON</b>	hungarotonmusic.com	
Bach, JS Brandenburg Concs. <i>Capella Savaria/Kalló.</i>	Ⓕ ② <b>HCD32786/7</b>	
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La Rue Masses. <i>Brabant Ens/Rice.</i>	Ⓕ <b>CDA68150</b>	
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Elgar Sym No 1. In the South (pp2012/13). <i>S Cecilia Orch/Pappano.</i>	Ⓕ <b>ICAC5138</b>	
Schumann Syms Nos 2 & 4 (pp2012/10). <i>S Cecilia Orch/Pappano.</i>	Ⓕ <b>ICAC5139</b>	
<b>KAIROS</b>	kairos-music.com	
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Grisey Espaces acoustiques. <i>Knox/WDR SO, Cologne/Aisbury.</i>	Ⓜ ② <b>0012422KAI</b>	
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Weeks Signs of Occupation. <i>Plus-Minus Ens.</i>	Ⓕ <b>MSV28559</b>	
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Wolff Incidental Music & Kybd Miscellany. <i>Wolff.</i>	Ⓕ ② <b>MODE286/7</b>	
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Brahms Early Pf Wks. <i>Carcano.</i>	Ⓕ <b>OC1850</b>	
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Glass Wks. <i>Cluster Ens.</i>	Ⓢ ③ <b>OMM0109</b>	
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Various Cpsrs Geography of Sound. <i>Trio Klavis.</i>	Ⓕ <b>ORO020</b>	
<b>OUR RECORDINGS</b>	ourrecordings.com	
Borup-Jørgensen Pf Wks. <i>Kaltoft.</i>	Ⓕ ② <b>6 220616</b>	
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Beethoven Vn Sons Nos 1 & 5. <i>Grumiaux/Arrau.</i>	Ⓕ <b>PTC5186 235</b>	
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Beethoven Sym No 4 <i>Shostakovich</i> Sym No 10 (pp1955). <i>Leningrad PO/Mravinsky.</i>	Ⓕ <b>DSD350 115</b>	
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Jarre, M Is Paris Burning? <i>OST.</i>	Ⓕ ② <b>TADLOW023</b>	
<b>TOCCATA CLASSICS</b>	toccataclassics.com	
Couperin, F Wks for Two Hpds, Vol 2. <i>Buckley/Schwarz.</i>	Ⓕ <b>TOCC0258</b>	
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<b>PRIORY</b>	priory.org.uk
Various Cpsrs Grand Org of Gloucester Cath. <i>Hope.</i>	Ⓜ ③ (CD + <b>DVD + E <b>DVD PRDVD14</b></b> )



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Marche funèbre <b>78</b>	<b>P</b>	Gloriosae virginis Mariae <b>89</b>	Piano Trios – Nos 1 & 2 <b>69</b>	Solo Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 82; No 2, Op 95; No 3, Op 126 <b>78</b>
<b>Legrenzi</b>	<b>Paderewski</b>	Hodie completi sunt dies Pentecostes <b>89</b>	Symphony No 5 <b>104</b>	<b>Weinberger</b>
Balletti e correnti, Op 16 – selection <b>65</b>	Minuer Paradies Toccata <b>78</b>	Magnificats – Primus tonus I; Secundus tonus I; Quartus tonus II <b>89</b>	Three Fantastic Dances <b>78</b>	Overture to a Chivalrous Play <b>55</b>
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Symphonies – No 1; No 4, 'Italian' <b>51</b>	Vespers, 'All-Night Vigil', Op 37 <b>88</b>	<b>Schubert</b>	<b>Todd</b>	
<b>Mozart</b>	Sonatas, Op 1 – No 6; No 8 <b>58</b>	Ellens Gesänge <b>94</b>	Concerto for Emma <b>57</b>	
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Clarinet Quintet in A major, K581 <b>105</b>	Dances with the Winds, Op 69 (two versions) <b>50</b>	Octet <b>105</b>	<b>Umstatt</b>	
Die Entführung aus dem Serail <b>100</b>	<b>Ragazzi</b>	Die schöne Müllerin <b>91</b>	Concertos for Violin, Strings and Continuo – No 5; No 6 <b>58</b>	
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	Rapsodie espagnole <b>105</b>	<b>Schumann</b>	<b>Vivaldi</b>	
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	The Victorian Kitchen Garden – Suite <b>57</b>	Fantasie in C <b>96</b>		
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	Clapping Music <b>68</b>			
	Double Sextet <b>68</b>			
	Music for Pieces of Wood <b>68</b>			

# Miles Jupp

The comedian and actor on the joy of belting out a hymn, and the thrill of pounding the bass drum in a school performance of Verdi's Requiem

**I was not** a chorister when at St George's School, Windsor, but I did a lot of music there. There was a thing called a Supers' Choir – we would sing Evensong once a term, and that would be our focus. It's like the difference between club level and professional sport, because the choristers would do that Monday to Friday, and a Saturday Evensong, and three services on Sunday, and they would learn that day after day. So they were doing over the space of three hours what we were doing over the course of roughly a term.

**I love singing** a proper hymn. We go to church in Wales, where we live, and if *Cwm Rhondda* is one of the hymns, I can sense family members moving away from me as the opening chords start up, as they know I'm not going to hold back! In the TV series *Rev*, sometimes we got to record a few hymns, which I always enjoyed – very little of it ended up in the programme as I went over the top and tried to show off, which is completely unacceptable in the world of sitcom.

**I remember** playing the bass drum in Verdi's Requiem, in the *Dies Irae*, and I would probably be able to play that now without any rehearsal I reckon. Maybe it wouldn't be very awesome but I can still hear it clearly. It must have been with Oakham Choral Society, which had links with my secondary school. I didn't realise it counted as being a soloist, so apparently I'd got my own applause at the end which I'd completely failed to acknowledge and I would have been just standing there staring at my feet I suppose.

**I always enjoyed** music, but I think in your twenties you sort of wander off a bit mentally, and then opportunities come up. I got invited by the head of Radio 4 to a Prom, and went to see Yo-Yo Ma play Bach's Cello Suites. I was sat in a box – me, Robert Peston and Nick Robinson, watching Yo-Yo Ma. Absolutely mad. But amazing. And when that started – just a man walking on stage, on his own, there's a chair, there's a table, there's a glass of water, and there's us. And he wanders on, sits down, no electronic amplification, no music stand – that was absolutely astonishing. And as he started you could feel just thousands of people focusing straight in, just being hit by it. That was a completely amazing evening.

**I suppose we** used to listen to quite a lot as a family. I mean, we wouldn't all sit down and listen to gramophones. But my parents would hear a piece of music and become obsessed by it. So, for instance, the Elgar Cello Concerto played by Jacqueline du Pré – they said 'You must listen to this', and we listened to that in the car, as we did over and over with Tom Lehrer and Max Boyce and things like that. There are just these pieces of music, and once they're in your mind they're always with you.



## THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

**'I Was Glad'** Sacred Choral Music by Parry  
Choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor /  
Christopher Robinson Hyperion

We used to have this cassette in the car – if I ever heard this, it would make me so happy. It's glorious.

**I used to** have a cassette tape of Daniel Barenboim playing Chopin's piano music, and I just thought it was great. The polonaises, the *Raindrop* Prelude, I really loved it all. I had a preposterous idea that I would write a biography of Chopin one day despite knowing only what my piano teacher told me about him – something to do with him being not very happy and it raining, but that seemed enough to me, that seemed to be the perfect start.

**I remember when** I was a backpacker, and a few times I went to see an opera. I saw *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in Budapest. I'd gone along in my jeans and jumper and thought, 'Goodness, I look really messy, everyone's dressed up.' But every sort of person was there – you'd see the sort of person that goes to the National Theatre and opera houses here – retired doctors and so on – but then also young couples who appeared to be on dates, other people who had presumably got babysitters, and the lads – five guys who were starting an evening out by going to the opera. Just every sort of person was there, and it didn't have a kind of divide that's either real or felt here. At the interval I remember just looking around and thinking, 'This is amazing, what a broad range of people, types and ages, all in one place.' **Miles Jupp's stand-up tour, 'Songs of Freedom', begins on September 7 at Milton Keynes Stables; visit [milesjupp.co.uk](http://milesjupp.co.uk)**

# CELLO

## unwrapped

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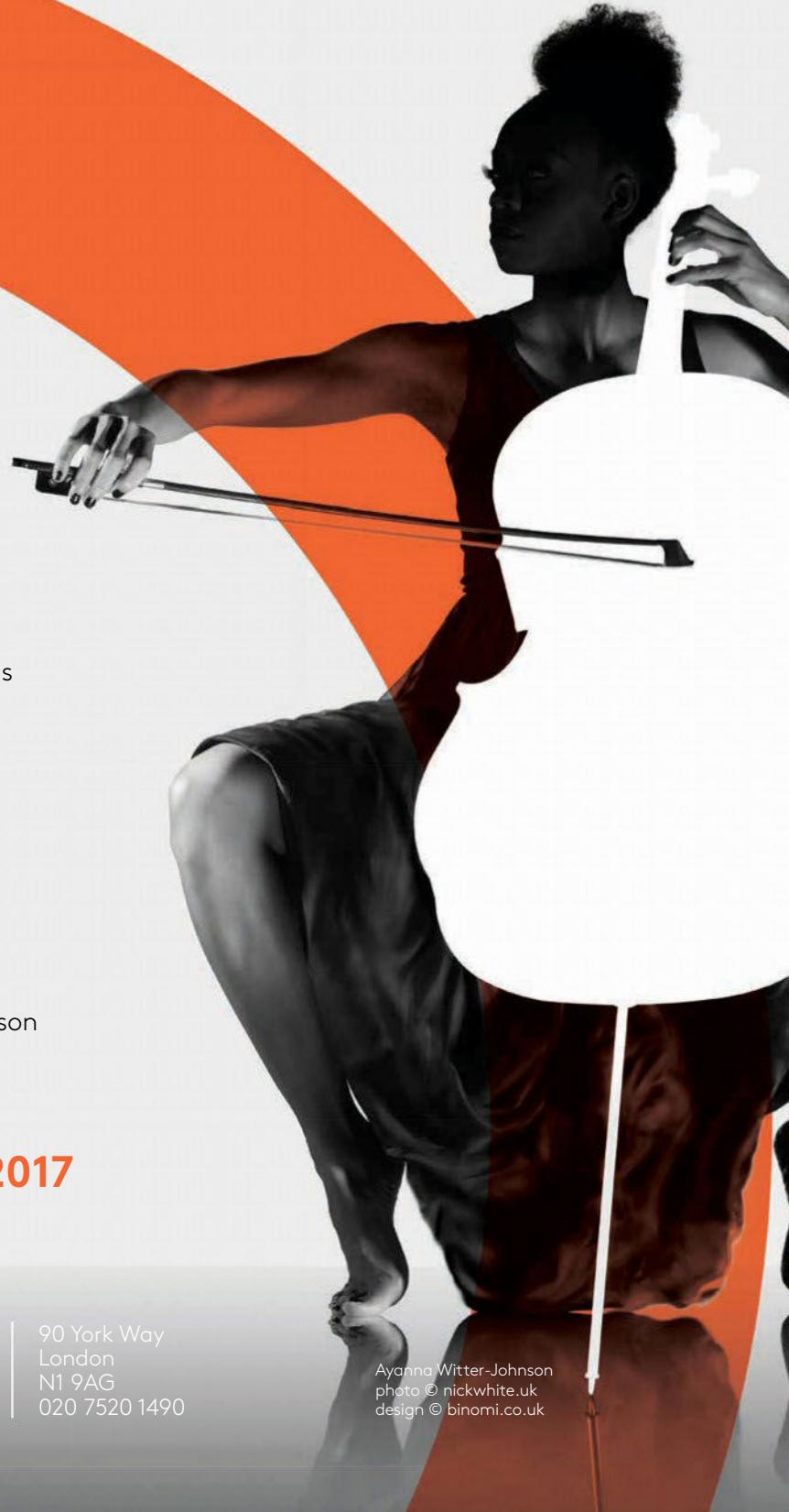
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